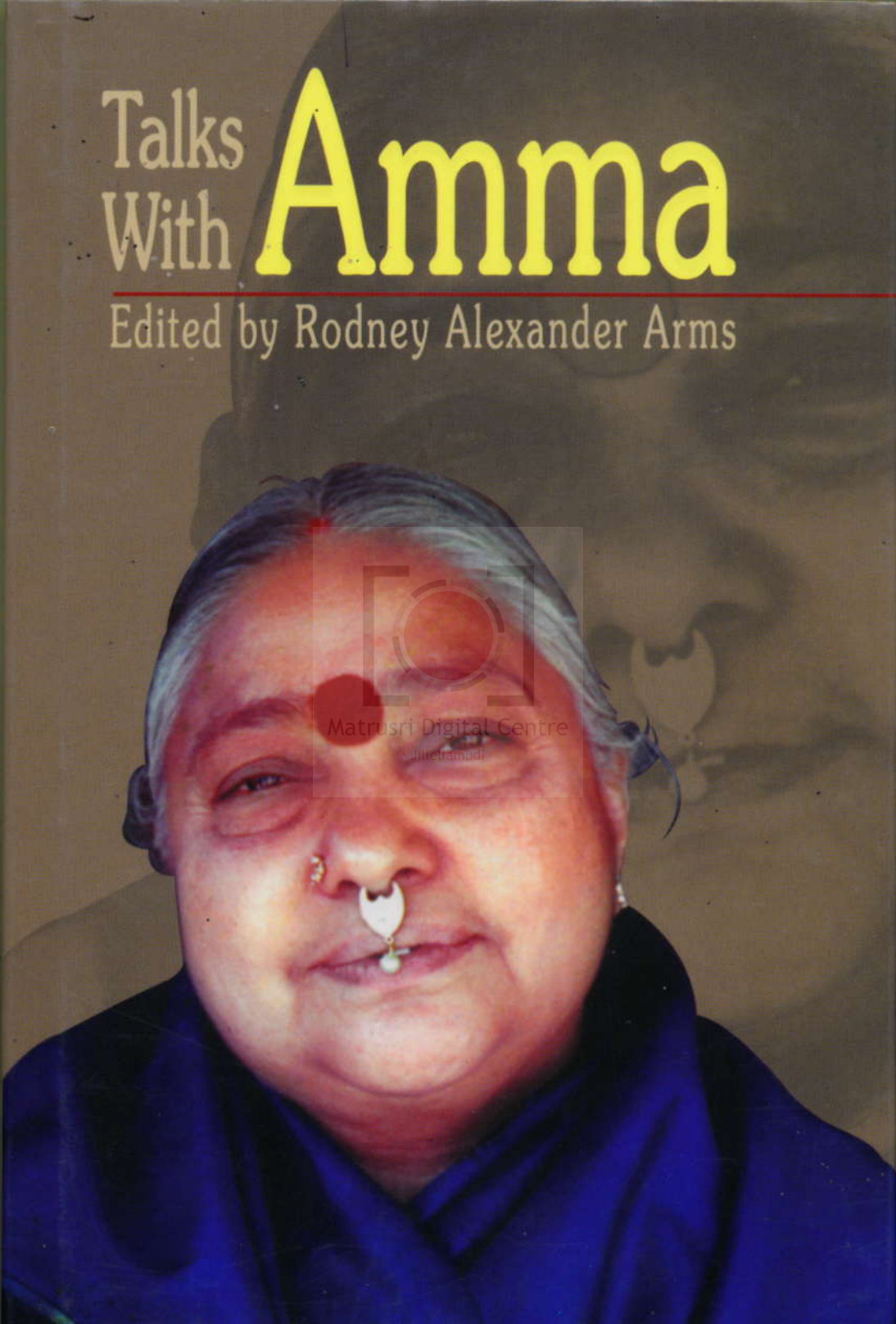
Talks With Amma

Edited by Rodney Alexander Arms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Talks With Amma

Edited by

Rodney Alexander Arms

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Foreword

This is one of the most significant books of conversations on 'spiritual life' in recent times. Amma's talks on this notoriously elusive area with Rodney Arms are easily comparable to such classics as *Talks With Ramana Maharshi* and Nisarga Datta's *I am That*. But one wonders what is unique about these talks with Amma who led the inconspicuous life of a housewife with all the travails it involves including the tragic, untimely passing away of a daughter? The usual insignia of spirituality are, by and large, minimal, and there was also nothing of any startling dialectics of debate. Then what, in retrospect, is remarkable?

One should, it seems to me, first point to Amma's language. She spoke in Telugu (one of the ancient South Indian languages and for its subtle rhythmic cadences termed 'the Italian of the East') and that was marked by clarity, transparency and immediacy. The nuances, the remarkable play on words, indeed the inwardness, which mark her speech are untranslatable.

Amma turns words upside down so that the 'word' beyond words illumines the truths she communicates. The seventeenth century Telugu saint-poet Vemana hits the nail on the head:

Unless words are shed the Word is unattainable;

Until the Word itself withers the mind remains wayward;

Unless the mind focuses there is no freedom!

Since the Truth is beyond words, the real translation is not linguistic but teleological. And Rodney Arms catches the spirit

of the original so that even those who know the original enjoy the rendering with the impact of more than a mere rendering.

The ambiguity of Amma's words matches the ways in which she celebrates the felt experiences of contradiction and paradox as the language of the spirit. The apparent paradoxes startle and provoke the reader (or seeker) only to plunge him/her into deep contemplation. We then discover that a 'thesis' acquires punch by getting juxtaposed with an 'antithesis'. But Amma firmly stands in the way of a hasty 'synthesis'. Both the polarities are valid and the creative tension between them has no superficial or facile resolution. What she communicates is both the verbal equivalent of experience and the primacy of experience.

One should be very careful about 'dialogic spirituality'. The author mentions that he came to Amma from the Krishnamurti stream. And (if I can put it this way) obviously, enquiry and all that go with it are Krishnaji's forte. Enquiry to explore through dialogue and through thought as both a system of debate and clarification, and also thought as inducing a sort of complacency or as Luce Irigaray calls 'inertia'. Prof. Irigaray says that 'Yoga' is not just cessation of thoughts *(chittavrittis)* but a subtler process, and clarifies the point:

> This tradition seems to me to possess a subtlety that demands, on the contrary, a real aptitude for thought. It is not a matter of thinking any way one pleases. It is necessary to learn again to think without centering on the object, for example, to think in a living and free manner, unattached, neither egological nor possessive. This does not mean not thinking but being capable of going beyond the inertias of thought in order to set its energy free. Is this not the path shown by Buddha, in our age, in his own way, by Krishnamurti?

To put it simply, for Amma, thought is not a trap or a prison-house; it is an experience. This is the reason why when she answers a question the answer is not an invitation to further

interrogation. But if one is alert, the answer is the key to unlock an introspective experience. What results (or *ought* to result which, of course, depends on Amma's grace!) is simple awareness, an awareness that is total, however tentative or temporal, it appears to be.

Does all this sound cryptic, confusing? Yes. But then take an instance: a seeker asks Amma, 'Did you come to your present state without doing any *sadhana*?' Amma answers, 'For me there is no *sadhana*. But only the possible, *sadhya*.' Explaining this, she says: '*Sadhana* and seeking arise only if it is thought that there is something other than all this (visible creation). I never think about achieving something that is not already here now.'

Then is there no place, or need for *sadhana*? Amma says, 'Things happen around me but I take no part in them. An event becomes an experience only when I am emotionally involved. I am in a state which is complete which seeks not to improve on itself.' This is releasing and realizing the energy of an event, which is denuded of its tendency to invite emotional involvement. In other words, absence of emotional involvement is *not* (it seems to me, for Amma) being a mute witness, *sakshi*. A witness is detached which is absence of attachment. This is 'sympathetic uninvolvement.' As my mentor 'Sri Ram' would say the art of attachment should be such that there is enough detachment so that the potentiality of attachment (experiencing the event) does not become the source of sorrow. The event *is*. That *is* the Reality. One can, for instance, compare Amma's insight to what Nisargadatta Maharaj says: 'Whatever effort you make, whatever method you follow, will merely generate more experience, but will not take you beyond.'

Amma goes, perhaps, a step further. She obliterates the hierarchy of objects: like some are fit and proper for *sadhana*

some are not. Taking examples, which are disarmingly commonplace and part of the daily routine of a mainly rural ethos, Amma says:

'I never think of achieving something that is not already here now. It gives me satisfaction when fodder is given to the cattle and they eat it. When the milk is churned I feel contented because the buttermilk can be served to many people. It gives me satisfaction to see you have your meals. I am pleased if you are well provided for. When a hungry dog comes to the door, if it is given food, I feel satisfied.'

Clinching the whole thing, Amma says: '*What we see is all.* It never occurred to me that all this was a burden to be dispensed with. Seeking whether outwardly metaphysical or spiritual was not for me. *I was never after anything*' (emphasis added). Obviously, the universe, if it appears as a vale of tears full of sorrow, it is because by giving undue emphasis on seeking and achieving, we miss the fact that, as Paramahamsa Ramakrishna would say, the Mother's creation is, 'a mart of joy'. *Majer Kuti.*

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The key is being natural, not being, to use the popular word spiritual. In these days, the spiritual implies by and large *ritual* of mass meditations and pooja. All along, meditations in a room set apart shut out the outer concentrating on the inner, and dismissing the outer as *maya*. *What we see is all* says Amma and we can (with profound apologies to her) add *all there is*. In words, which are irrefutably authoritative, she says: 'This looks real and eternal. Look at that tree. It exists though it may grow taller and thicker. Forms may come and go, but this creation has existed from eternity. It is not as though it began at some moment; it ever was and ever will be.' She adds: 'I say: All this is that. The two are the same, not different. That which appears before us—This alone is Reality.' And, 'all creation is *Atmaswarupa*.' All this reminds us of what Ramana Maharshi

constantly affirmed: 'The universe is conceived to be apart from *Brahman* and that perception is wrong.'

Amma's insistence that no one should go without food—when they come to see her—has its roots in this. For her, the body is the 'biological temple' and the best worship is to treat it with the sanctity that we accord to a temple. When dacoits strike and are caught and brought to her Amma says: 'Serve them some coffee. They too are my children.'

Then, we ask the inevitable, irrepressible, question: 'Why are there suffering, disease, distress? Why do bad things happen to good people?' A witty answer is: there is no guarantee that good things will happen when good people turn bad: Look at Amma's categorical answer: 'There is no one devoid of suffering. Everyone has his own kind,' she says and with that enchanting smile of hers, adds a truth harsh for us but natural for her: "We have come for that alone, my child. In fact 'living' means 'suffering'. If there were no sufferings, living would be unnecessary. What kind of a life would that be? 'Suffering' means 'life'."

'When experienced joyfully,' Amma says, 'suffering ceases to be suffering.' And joy emerges from patience: patience is perception that s/he who creates joy creates its suffering as its counterpart. Amma gives a natural example: 'The blows of the chisel are required to import beauty to stone.' One can cite the narrative of Gajendra, the elephant, caught by a crocodile and praying to Lord Vishnu for protection. As the sage 'Sri Ram' would say: 'If only the elephant realized that the crocodile was also the Lord's creation, things would have been different.' After all, as they say, 'pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.'

Amma, thus, represents the perennial tradition of natural wisdom rooted in and stemming from the 'web of mingled yarn,

good and ill together'. This is all the more precious for being the manifestation of the Eternal Feminine Power, the Adi Shakti. This spring of manifest love places her in the continuing line of the Eternal Mother, such as the Holy Mother, Sri Saradadevi, Mata Anandamayi and others.

We are extremely grateful to Rodney Arms for giving us this invaluable record. The inwardness with Amma's counselling, that her healing is a ministration, which he shows, is sure proof that Amma's love has no boundaries, no cultural specifications. Only Amma and others like her irrefutably prove that the global ethos is built only on love and care and concern for all. After all, Amma of Jillellamudi is Mother of All.

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Divine dispensation works in a wonderful way and the process leading to the printing of this book is an example. Though the thought of bringing out this book has been persisting for quite some time, in view of the non-availability of copies of the book, and general suggestions coming forth for printing the same, the main inspiration and backing for this project has come from our revered friend Prof. M. Sivaramakrishna. He has provided his wholehearted support right from the very beginning, promising to look into all aspects towards its printing, like reformatting, putting through to the publisher for suggestions regarding the composition of the book and other relevant information, assuring us of all help. Viswajanani Trust owes immense gratitude to him for the remarkable support, in spite of his hands being full with his own commitments to various spiritual organizations.

We acknowledge with grateful thanks the permission accorded by Dr Timothy Conway to include the chapter on Anasuya Devi from his book *Women of Power and Grace* published by Wakeup Press, Santa Barbara (USA).

Another demonstration of Amma's grace was regarding raising necessary finances to meet the cost of printing. Making an estimate of the cost, an announcement was made in the quarterly journal 'Mother of All' (October–December, 2004) giving this information and making known our intention to get this book printed if enough funds are forthcoming.

The first response to this announcement came from Sri Changanti Venkata Rao of Kakinada through a token contribution, more importantly, the encouraging letter lauding our efforts. More telling support to this project came in December 2004 from quite an unexpected (from the standpoint of one of us who happened to visit Jillellamudi in December) source. Enquiring about the present state of funding and appreciating our endeavours, Mr Angara Suryanarayana, our dearest brother and an ardent devotee from Bangalore offered a major portion of the estimated cost. Viswajanani Trust owes deep gratitude to him and his wife who was behind this offer.

Another amazing support followed from our old and dearest brother overseas, Mr Gordon Westerlund who always has been with us in all our activities. We consider it a great blessing of Amma to have given us a brother like him and our grateful thanks go to him in joining us in this effort.

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Our special thanks to Mrs Vasantha Rajkumar who did a commendable job in typesetting the material given to her and catch up with the time that was slipping out for reasons beyond our control.

Viswajanani Trust

Preface

The book *Talks With Amma* was first compiled and edited by Rodney Alexander Arms, a seeker (turned devotee later) from New Zealand who happened to visit Jillellamudi for the first time in 1976. On his very first visit he decided to extend his stay for a couple of years more and made best of his stay by making a painstaking effort to gather material of Amma's conversations with devotees on different occasions, covering a wide range of topics, from the diaries maintained till then and through discussions with some of the inmates there. These information were first brought out in book form by the Matrusri Publications Trust in 1980.

This book evoked deep interest and inspiration among the spiritually inclined people. As a result of the growing demand it was found that the copies of the book were no longer sufficient to meet the requirements. Hence, the Viswajanani Trust, Hyderabad felt it fit to bring the treasure of wisdom emanating from the Divinity itself, within the reach of the brothers in the spiritual path world over on behalf of the Matrusri Publications Trust, Jillellamudi by publishing this book. The Viswajanani Trust, Hyderabad has as one of its objectives, the publication of books pertaining to Matrusri Anasuya Devi (Jillellamudi Amma) and thus make available the literature, spreading the message of Amma.

The Viswajanani Trust earlier brought out the first part of Amma's biography in Telugu *Amma Jeevita Mahodadhi* and has on its anvil some more publications, which are keenly awaited.

June 2006 **Viswajanani Trust**

Editor's Note

Readers unfamiliar with the jungle of Indian philosophy need not be confused by the Sanskrit terms appearing in the book—an English equivalent is given when the term first appears in each section.

There are many ways of thinking about HIM, and therefore many names—God, Divinity, Him, It, That, Reality, Truth, Life, Mind, *Sakti* (Energy), *Svabhava* (Innermost Nature), *Prerana* (Force of Impulsion), *Atman* (Absolute Subject), *Brahman* (Absolute Object), and so on—but all mean the same to Amma: 'All names are HIS'. The context should make it clear if some distinction is emphasized; otherwise the reader is free to substitute any term he or she prefers.

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In 1962 the devoted young women living with, and serving Amma, began maintaining diaries of the conversations which occurred between Amma and her visitors. In 1971 Sri Garudadri Subrahmanyam became the scribe. Their notes were the chief sources for some Telugu books of sayings, and for the talks and sayings published in the monthly English and Telugu 'Matrusri Journals'.

Soon after he arrived at Jillellamudi in late 1976, the editor was encouraged by Sri J. Chalapati to bring together all the talks which had been translated into English by various people (including Sri D. V. Krishna Sarma and Dr S. Gopalakrishna Murty) and published in the English 'Matrusri'. Sri Ch Venkata Rao assisted in obtaining some clarifications from Amma. Some talks were taped, transcribed and translated by Sri K. Gopala

Rao, who assisted also in a revision (which involved comparison with the Telugu versions when possible), and in obtaining additional matter from the Telugu publications when a topic seemed inadequately covered in English.

No special merit is claimed for the present arrangement. It is a compromise, for original thought resists being systematized. Each and every topic may be discussed anywhere. Talks dealing primarily with the topics of *karma* and rebirth, the spiritual quest and its goal, and Amma's state, will be published as another book, if the opportunity arises.

It is ultimately impossible to justify combining passages or sayings spoken by Amma in different contexts, nevertheless, where it seemed advisable, it was done (not always very satisfactorily), particularly in the following sections: Scripture and experience; There's no 'other' to attain, *Atman-anatman* enquiry; *Sakti* (third part); The body; The mind; 'What is' is mind; Death is change, not annihilation; Whatever is experienced is real; Mind is present in sleep; The one I has become all the I's (first and third parts). Nothing is in our hands; Selfishness; He acts a role in His own drama; 'The House of All'" (first part); The 'good fate' in store for all.

Since they were spoken, Amma's words have undergone a long process of being noted (or taped and transcribed), translated, edited and printed. If Amma should reveal something of Herself to the reader through the pages of this book, it is due to Grace alone. Any personal responsibility for the inevitable distortions must rest with the editor; Amma has not gone through the book.

Jillellamudi,
4 August 1980.

Rodney A. Arms,
Editor

Anasuya Devi
(Amma of Jillellamudi)

The sacred land of India, so potently blessed by the spiritual practices of ancient adepts, has hosted several distinguished incarnations *(avataras)* of the divine Mother in the last hundred years. In 1923, in a backward area near India's east central coast, the Mother Light emanated a form for the sake of suffering humanity: this was Anasuya Devi, clearly one of the greatest spiritual presences ever to be embodied on this planet. Yet Anasuya Devi is still not well known over most of her native country, nor in the West, undoubtedly because she did not travel but spent virtually all of her adult life in the little village of Jillellamudi in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, local crowds sometimes swelled to as many as 100,000 or more persons on festival days to see this 'Mother of all' and be inspired by her all-forgiving love. We do well to study her fascinating life and paradoxically liberating teachings so as to better glimpse another case of Divine Consciousness expressing itself in human form.

Little Anasuya was born at the dawn of 28 March 1923, an auspicious day on the Hindu lunar calendar, in the village Mannava near Bapatla in the Guntur district. Her birth came in the wake of numerous lovely visions and spiritual experiences that graced her well-to-do *Brahmin* parents before and during the pregnancy. This must have been something of a consolation to Anasuya's mother, Rangamma, who had lost five previous children in pregnancy or infancy, and might naturally have been apprehensive over another

pregnancy. But the birth went smoothly—the only unusual elements being that the baby did not cry at birth, and the midwife began having visions of the Divine Mother at her advent! A glimpse of things to come.

This was clearly a special child: the little one did not cry for milk, and would seem interested in suckling only when the breast was offered. Anasuya also seemed adept at going into a *samadhi* trance-state in early infancy, because her breath would often be suspended, once for a period of some four days! Anasuya was apparently fully conscious of her surroundings at birth, for later, she reported clear memories of various details from this time. It is most strange but also highly auspicious that a dog and a cat came to expire at her feet, and no less than eleven persons from her mother's and father's families died during her first four weeks of life. This was interpreted as a sign that she was embodying a great light that drew people's spirit straightaway back into God.

When, later in her life, people would ask Anasuya Devi when she had attained perfection, she would tell them, with the spiritual authority which only a few other great *avataras* have displayed, that she was 'always the same', always established as the One Consciousness. She seems not to have had any need to 'work out *karma*' in this present life.

At nineteen months, Anasuya was observed to be seated in the 'full lotus' yogic posture, deeply immersed in an unshakable *samadhi* state. A visiting holy man told little Anasuya's mother, and later another holy man told her father (who was the village *karanam*, or accountant), that the child was a special manifestation of God. Many signs would confirm these assessments. For example, in early childhood it was noticed that food went right through her undigested, and yet she showed no ill effects from this. When a local physician went to put a very poisonous herb around her neck as a talisman to alleviate this condition, she grabbed it and chewed it up without any

effect, calmly declaring 'Can such a thing kill one who is not destined to die?' In later life, Amma would frequently go very long periods without eating, sometimes even abandoning all liquids, usually considered an essential need, especially in such a hot, humid region. For the most part, her daily fare was a cup or two of coffee and perhaps a bit of vegetable broth. Nevertheless, her body was plump and full of energy. One of her biographers claimed she could imbibe the essence of food at a distance, especially food offered at shrines by her devotees; yet Amma insisted to him that she needed no nourishment at all. The story is told of Amma that any food she sampled no nourishment at all. The story is told of Amma that any food she sampled was for the sake of alleviating the suffering of fasting yogins at a distance who were weak with hunger. In most cases such tales would be dismissed as pious rationalizations; with Anasuya Devi, I suspect it is the truth.

Though Amma ate almost nothing herself, from childhood onwards she was conspicuous for always wanting to feed others and a number of miracles—such as multiplication of food—were associated with this behaviour. Such was her generosity in this regard that in her early youth Anasuya endured many scoldings for time and again giving away food to the destitute and stray animals, feeding them with her own hand—a major taboo for *Brahmin*s! Amma never showed any distinctions based on caste whatsoever, once claiming, 'my caste is that of the sperm and the ovum'!

The signs of her spiritual greatness as a child deserve further discussion. At the age of two and a half years she came to the rescue of a destitute woman by selflessly giving away her own train ticket and a golden bracelet. When Anasuya was only three or four years old, mother Rangamma experienced a stupendous vision of her daughter's spiritual glory as the Divine Mother, and shortly thereafter expired. Amma not only did not show any grief over her mother's passing, she profoundly challenged her father, grandfather, and others

to view death in a new light, as a return of the birthless, deathless Spirit to God. Moreover, the little girl demonstrated a total clairvoyance about the details of what was happening at the cremation ground some distance away.

After her mother's transition, Anasuya was looked after by relatives, especially her mother's uncle, Chidambara Rao, in the towns of Bapatla and Mannava. Yet she was given considerable freedom to come and go, which allowed her to interact with a number of persons of all castes, ages, and walks of life. These people were deeply impressed and uplifted by her extraordinary peace and goodness—so much so that they would refer to the little girl in the local Telugu language as 'Amma' or 'Mother', not using the Telugu diminutive term 'Ammayi' that is usually employed to address young girls.

Once while Amma was riding the train, a young boy saw her. He was riveted by her appearance, and wound up 'dropping the body' in her presence after his arm was injured by the falling window next to him. Amma, in exquisitely maternal fashion, helped the boy's grandfather deal with the grief and she gave him her gold ring. Yet she also challenged and counselled him about the deeper meaning of death, and then she prophetically told him that the boy might revive. This in fact happened, long enough for the child to hail Amma as his 'real mother' after which he died. Amma carried him but to a local field to bury him, while the grandfather, dazed by all these happenings, viewed her fearfully as the angel of death. Within a short time, he, too, died (evidently they had both died of cholera), yet not before coming to a realization that Amma's tiny person represented the 'Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer of all'.

Since her earliest childhood, Amma had been extremely precocious in the way she spoke to people. Penetrating words of wisdom or blunt confessions of her awakened spiritual state were the norm rather than the exception. Reading through the many

insightful dialogues she had with people, hearing her challenge them with masterfully enigmatic questions or expounding in pithy fashion the highest truths of the 'final teaching' of non-dual philosophy *(advaita Vedanta)*, one is stunned and deeply curious how such a profoundly clear consciousness could be expressing itself at such a tender age. The textbooks on child development surely need to be rewritten to account for such a phenomenon.

Once a wrestler met little Amma and experienced one of these question-and-answer encounters with her. He was tearfully moved to see in her the manifestation of the divine persons—Krishna and Radha. This vision was all the more poignant because, just prior to this encounter, the burly fellow had been prayerfully requesting a tangible experience of the Divinity. On another occasion when she was six, Amma took the initiative to visit a revered scholar-yogimonk, Sri Kalyananada Bharati. The old man wanted to initiate her with a *mantra*. However, Amma reversed the roles and soon, through her incredible display of wisdom and purity, she had the old fellow in tears of joy and gratitude for the privilege of meeting her. Chidambara Rao, her great-uncle, also enjoyed many of these wisdom interchanges with his little Amma.

Few of her relatives recognized Amma's spiritual grandeur. They thought her to be 'odd' or 'impertinent'. In her mid-teens, Amma's unconventional ways began to include some bizarre-looking 'fits' of falling, weeping, talking without any sense, nor recognizing family members, and so forth. Such behaviours have been seen in the lives of a number of 'God-intoxicated' souls in the history of religion. However, these actions were variously regarded by some of her relatives as being either signs of mental retardation, insanity or possession. How could they fathom the nature of Amma's deep spiritual states? Exorcists were brought in, to no avail, and finally, she was admitted to a Christian missionary hospital at Chirala. Here she stayed for a year, though rarely in her bed, for she devoted

herself to looking after and uplifting the other patients, also spending some of her time with the hospital staff playing tennis and other games. According to one of the residents who knew Amma in those days, both the patients and the staff looked upon her with deep veneration, recognizing her obvious holiness. Some of them experienced divine visions as a result of her influence. A few of the Christian staff members even thought her to be some kind of manifestation of Mother Mary.

A short time before her year of hospitalization began, namely, on 5 May 1936, Amma, aged thirteen, had married her cousin, Nageswara Rao, who in later life would be known as Nannagaru (*'respected father'*). Amma persisted in marrying him though her family had been resisting the marriage for several years due to his lower social standing. It turns out that Amma had a clear memory—from the time when she was only one month old—of hearing the women in her household joking that one day she might marry Rao, who had been present as a ten-year-old boy at her naming ceremony a few days before. It was in answer to those words, which everyone else had forgotten, that Amma insisted on marrying Rao a dozen years later.

To 'stabilize' her strange mystical condition, Amma was sent off to the Christian hospital shortly after their marriage. After her return a year later, she settled down with her husband and enthusiastically loved, served and obeyed him in perfect fulfilment of the ancient *stridharma* ideal for Hindu wives, an ideal that she did not consider to be at all demeaning. In later years, she replied to someone's question about her getting married that marriage need not be a hindrance to a deeply spiritual life, and is not inferior to the path of renunciation.

In 1941, Amma, Nannagaru, and their new infant son moved to Jillellamudi, a backward, impoverished, faction-ridden little village, eight and a half miles (the last part a difficult journey) from Bapatla.

herself to looking after and uplifting the other patients, also spending some of her time with the hospital staff playing tennis and other games. According to one of the residents who knew Amma in those days, both the patients and the staff looked upon her with deep veneration, recognizing her obvious holiness. Some of them experienced divine visions as a result of her influence. A few of the Christian staff members even thought her to be some kind of manifestation of Mother Mary.

A short time before her year of hospitalization began, namely, on 5 May 1936, Amma, aged thirteen, had married her cousin, Nageswara Rao, who in later life would be known as Nannagaru (*'respected father'*). Amma persisted in marrying him though her family had been resisting the marriage for several years due to his lower social standing. It turns out that Amma had a clear memory—from the time when she was only one month old—of hearing the women in her household joking that one day she might marry Rao, who had been present as a ten-year-old boy at her naming ceremony a few days before. It was in answer to those words, which everyone else had forgotten, that Amma insisted on marrying Rao a dozen years later.

To 'stabilize' her strange mystical condition, Amma was sent off to the Christian hospital shortly after their marriage. After her return a year later, she settled down with her husband and enthusiastically loved, served and obeyed him in perfect fulfilment of the ancient *stridharma* ideal for Hindu wives, an ideal that she did not consider to be at all demeaning. In later years, she replied to someone's question about her getting married that marriage need not be a hindrance to a deeply spiritual life, and is not inferior to the path of renunciation.

In 1941, Amma, Nannagaru, and their new infant son moved to Jillellamudi, a backward, impoverished, faction-ridden little village, eight and a half miles (the last part a difficult journey) from Bapatla.

Amma knew that her public mission was soon to begin. Nevertheless, for a few years, she continued to maintain a low profile apparently only interested in raising her family and serving the local populace with her many acts of kindness. She never hankered after any leadership role or desired to have 'followers'. In 1955, Amma laid the foundations of a temple for the people. Jillellamudi seems to have been one of the few Indian villages lacking an adequate-sized centre for religious devotions. A previous attempt had been made by some villagers, but the foundations built by them had collapsed, and Amma was asked to carry out this auspicious task.

In spite of Amma's obvious goodness, or perhaps because of it, she was persecuted and harassed by the ignorant and jealous miscreants. They probably resented the presence of this high-caste *Brahmin* family in their village. Amma uncomplainingly suffered the ill effects of several attempts on her life made by them. Things began to change, however, when a village thug hired to harm her instead was won over by Amma's love and became *her* hired hand. Both he and the man who replaced him at his death saw Amma's greatness. By the mid 1950s other people, too, had begun to discover her, especially after she fulfilled the wishes of a relative at nearby Kommur by healing his wife's paralyzed leg. After this event, two kind souls, Krishnavenamma and her husband Haridas (Sriramula Venkateswarlu), began visiting her. Krishnavenamma often came by herself, happily walking eight miles to see her. They became the first devotees to settle down near her several years later in 1958. Krishnavenamma experienced extraordinary dreams, visions and bi-locations of Amma (later in life she would easily go into *samadhi* for several hours at a time in Amma's presence). She was overjoyed when eventually allowed to be the first of Amma's attendants. Another staunch early devotee was Rukminamma, who likewise, was graced with many extraordinary experiences of Amma. She later lived with her family at Jillellamudi and was Amma's travelling companion when Amma began visiting some of the cities in the area in the early 1960s.

Around 1956 Amma's influence occasioned a few more healings. She also performed an exorcism for someone. Predictably, people were soon coming to her in droves, primarily on weekends. These were not only local village folk but also *Brahmin*s from nearby towns and a dozen professional men who regularly visited her from Chirala. Visitors would rest their heads on her lap or massage her legs while she seated for hours with her visitors, and they would report receiving a strong blessing-force from Amma. They would ask her myriad questions and be amazed by the pearls of wisdom that emerged in response. Upon their departure, Amma would give them fruits and small packages of vermilion powder *(kumkum)*, sacred to the goddess, as *prasada*. (*Prasada* is 'God's gift'; it is customary when visiting an Indian saint to bring a gift of food or flowers that the guru then blesses and distributes to all as a consecrated token of God's love for humanity.) If no fruits or *kumkum* powder were available, she would bless and give them pieces of earth, which, wondrously, would be sweet and fragrant for days, having been consecrated by her divine touch.

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In 1958, early in the morning of a full-moon day, Amma gave *mantras,* sacred power-phrases, individually to some 600 people who had gathered. Thereby she fulfilled old Rajamma's desire that Amma become a Guru. Sri K. Gopala Rao, a longtime devotee, participated in this vast initiation and relates a mysterious aspect: despite the size of the crowd and the fact that it normally takes at least two to three minutes to properly initiate a person, it took Amma, not 20 or 30 hours, but only ninety minutes to carry out the sacred task. In retrospect, people wondered how this could have occurred. After this momentous occasion, however, Amma would not initiate anyone. She declared that she was neither guru nor guide nor teacher—simply 'Mother' of all.

Husband Nannagaru was forced to let go off his attachments to strict Hindu standards of 'proper' behaviour for his unconventional

wife. Eventually, he completely dropped his attachment to her as 'my wife' and instead saw her as a divine being. This conviction of her greatness was deepened after both a doctor and a respected yogi he had brought in to evaluate Amma, judged her to be a fully God-realized being. For her part, Anasuya always obeyed him and asked permission for everything the devotees wanted to do in their honouring of her, such as Mr Murthy commencing the practice of doing ritual worship *(puja)* to her as a human manifestation of the goddess. Nannagaru would acquiesce to her requests and she would revere him, actually performing the *pada-puja* (worship of the 'lotus feet' to him—which her devotees construed as a case of 'the Divine worshipping man'.

Amma often went into trances during this early phase of her public mission. Once Nannagaru found her in *samadhi* in the kitchen, her unharmed hand immersed in a pot of boiling water. On another occasion Amma summoned a doctor and forewarned him to look after things, because she was going on a 'spiritual journey'. She then 'dropped the body' for eleven days, all her vital signs becoming completely extinguished; yet she returned to perfect functioning after this strange suspension of life on the physical plane. (This may be the longest Near-Death Experience on record!)

On a day in 1956, Amma's *ajnacakra* the 'third eye' between the eyebrows) suddenly burst open with blood. She put her hand to the spot and a small amount of sacred ash *(vibhuti)* quickly filled up the area, which she gave out as blessed offerings *(prasada)* to those present. Who can explain the mysterious ways of Divine Providence?

As mentioned earlier, Amma's favourite activity with people was feeding them sumptuous portions. She usually seemed to know the right amounts to have prepared for people, even large groups of hundreds who came unexpectedly would find food already prepared for them. If, on rare occasions, there was not enough food available, it would be miraculously multiplied so as to feed all those present.

After a while, seeing that Amma herself could no longer do all the food preparations herself, her friend Prabhavati began to help. On 15 August 1958, Amma had a large, simple shed built, and a widowed female devotee was put in charge to feed the several hundred visitors who were coming each day. This *'Annapurnalayam'*—'the abode of the Goddess of plentiful food or Eternal kitchen'—served simple vegetarian fare to all who needed, day or night. As for where the money and food came from to support this place, this was something of a mystery in the early years. The most likely source was spontaneous donations made by the wealthy who could easily afford it and who were spontaneously brought in by the Divine Will to help out on such a worthy project. The fact is that no one who came to eat was ever asked to contribute any money for this food. Two years later, the 'House of All' *('Andarillu')* was also opened to provide restful lodging for any people who came.

Both of these institutions fulfilled a desire Amma had entertained since childhood to establish institutions for social welfare. This emerging *asrama*-complex at Jillellamudi, now known as *'arkapuri'* served as an open home for Amma's extended 'universal family'. Anyone who came immediately felt like a brother or sister who belonged there. Unlike certain other ashrams or monasteries around the world, here at Arkapuri there was no sense of hierarchy, of 'longtimers' holding higher status in contrast to 'new-comers'. Genuine egalitarianism prevailed. At its peak, some 100 residents (the majority of whom were women) did the bulk of the work, yet newcomers staying for any length of time soon felt the urge to join them in the work of feeding, cleaning, and so forth. Certainly no pressure could be felt by newcomers to join in the work. Rather, they spontaneously aligned with the spirit of selfless service that permeated this place. Amma's aura of maternal, self-sacrificing kindness and industriousness was contagious.

In her own humble way, Amma was also effecting a renaissance of classical Indian culture: she established a Sanskrit school in 1966

(now the Matrusri Oriental College and High School), and within relatively a short time one could hear her residents speaking this ancient 'language of the gods' fluently among themselves. Like many eminent spiritual adepts, Amma was preparing, as perhaps her most important legacy, a community of people whose example of goodness might help catalyse the transformation of society.

Though Amma always humbly maintained that she was not at all different from anyone else, people coming to see her frequently experienced, to their great delight, visions of different aspects of god or the goddess in her presence. From time to time, Amma spontaneously demonstrated deep mystical states, wherein her body took on archetypal gestures of power *(mudras)* and her eyes seemed to be gazing unto infinity. These raptures catalysed wonderful transformations in her devotees. A number of people experienced Amma in visions, dreams and bi-locations, even when they had never met her before. In these remote appearances, she looked precisely as she did in real life, sometimes dressed in exactly the same clothes as she was wearing in Jillellamudi at that time. In many cases it has happened that just when a distressed devotee was crying out in need, Amma would suddenly appear out of nowhere and render some kind of service. Apparently, once having met someone, Amma never forgot that person even if he or she did not return for years. Numerous times Amma showed quite clearly that she knew in detail what people were doing in their homes miles away (for instance, what they were talking about, what spices they were putting into their food, and so on).

Tales are told of Amma controlling the elements, such as suddenly making it rain or stop raining, or decreasing dangerous floodwaters. One writer notes that 'hundreds of childless mothers were blessed with children' due to Amma's intercession. It was also frequently the case that lovely fragrances emanated around Amma, sometimes perceptible at a remote distance when she was thinking of someone.

And there occurred many healing of various diseases, both in Amma's presence and at a distance.

Almost every devotee has a tale of some paranormal and/or highly 'synchronous' happening that seemed to occur through her intercession. Amma, for her part, would try to take the focus off herself and pretend that she was not at all involved. She would say that all such things were due to the faith of devotees, not her doing. Once, in reply to someone seeking from her a miraculous favour for a son Amma responded, 'What a pity! My boy had also failed in his examination and my daughter is almost always suffering from a bad headache. I am not able to help my children, dear lady. What can I do for yours?' To anyone hankering after wondrous, paranormal happenings, she would declare, 'The creation itself is the most awe-inspiring miracle. What other miracle do you need?... There is no greater miracle than love and goodwill for one and all.' And yet, despite her 'protestations' and 'disclaimers' within this universal Miracle numerous 'lesser' miracles did, indeed, happen around Amma—much to the boundless joy and profound edification of many souls.

Amma appeared to people in different roles—a wise sage, playful (even mischievous) child, awesome Goddess, and dearest friend. Sometimes she seemed very young, other times very old. Though she was very short in physical stature (under five feet), sometimes she seemed quite tall. One of her biographers, the late Mr E. Bharadwaja, commented on how she was a marvellous combination of both delicacy and strength. Her eyes, too, were rather paradoxical: they usually radiated a remarkably concerned, compassionate quality, yet could also look quite detached and calm at the same time. When seeing her in person or when looking at pictures of Amma, one is struck, not only by her soft, round face with the glowing, fair complexion and sparkling nose-rings, but also by the unusually large, red mark of *kumkum* powder she applied daily to the *ajnacakra*

area between the brows. Usually a small dot is worn by Hindu wives, in Amma's case this *tilakam* gives the impression of a huge 'third eye' looking through oneself into infinity.

Anasuya Devi saw only the good in people and apparently had no concept, of 'sin' whatsoever. Amma often declared that she had no 'disciples' *(sisyas)*, only 'children' *(sisus)*. She treated all alike, even her own direct offspring, with the same ardent love. All-forgiving, simple, and motherly, she transmuted her numerous 'children' into noble souls through the deep silence and bliss that strongly made itself felt in her proximity. This is, of course, one of the classic hallmarks of a divinely realized being. In many cases people's chronic psychological problems, physical diseases, financial difficulties, bad habits, addictions and negative attitudes (pride, envy, shame, pettiness, and so on) would be cleared up once and for all by a simple look or utterance from Amma.

She plainly knew the inner states of all who came to her, and even fathomed the condition of people at a distance. Moreover, like a few other genuine embodiments of the Divine, Amma could unlock the innermost knots *(granthis)* of the Heart by her mere glance of presence. As Bharadwaja, her long-time well-wisher, describes the phenomenon, devotees would frequently experience 'the sudden gushing of a strange, indescribable emotion that brings a flow of tears from one's eyes'. Even when devotees such as Bharadwaja resisted, it was impossible to stop this flow of tears from emerging at a glance from Amma. The tears—a classic, cross-cultural sign of spiritual deepening—seemed to involve a release from an ancient burden. They were an expression of feeling finally at home, feeling that God/dess alone Is and that God/dess is nothing but Love. Such tears, often quite explosive and long lasting for some devotees, lent a deeply poignant quality to the blissful scene played out around Amma day after day.

Richard Schiffman, in his beautifully written biography of Amma (one of the very best in the entire genre of hagiography), has movingly described what it was like to be loved by such a one:

> Those eyes that look into eternity, what is it that they see when they look at me? It is with a shock that I realize that even now they are looking upon the eternal. Those eyes that see God everywhere are seeing God as me. We are none of us objects of those eyes – we are their subject: they touch us softly in a deep and hidden place where we are One...
>
> To be held in her faultless gaze was to realize that all others before have merely looked from the outside; and now I am seen for the first time – seen, not as the world sees me, not as I see myself, but as I am Truth, beyond the shifting facade of thought and image.

The ambience surrounding Amma was informal, just as would be expected with children around their mother. After devotees had arisen early at 4:30 a.m. to sing the traditional morning song *(suprabhatam)*, eaten breakfast, and engaged in some work, study, or spiritual practice, around mid-morning, they would come into the Vatsalyalayam residence to see Amma if her health permitted. (Amma had diabetes and heart disease for the last several decades of her life.) She would also usually be available for *darsan* (the 'sight/presence of a holy one') in the afternoon and/or evening.

What were these occasions like? She would be sitting cross-legged on a simple cot (sometimes a chair), the sole piece of furniture in the *darsan* room. This was a fairly large space, seating about seventy to hundred people. Amma spent much of the time engaging those present in joyful, animated, eloquent conversation and joking in her native Telugu tongue. She never adopted any cold, distant 'holier-than-thou' attitude, yet always maintained a tremendous poise, not indulging in frivolity. Moreover, Amma often took pains to put people at ease. For instance, it is recorded that on occasions when people brought fruit to her as *prasada,* fruit that had gotten bruise, and they were feeling badly about not having a 'pure offering' to

give to her, she would eat the rotten part of these fruits, thereby erasing any sense of inauspiciousness. There were a few occasions when Amma would look sternly at someone, perhaps as a kind of feedback for something amiss in their lives, but after a short while, she would resume with them her sweetly loving demeanor. When a new visitor came, Amma would immediately wish to know whether the person had eaten; on a few occasions she would even directly feed the lucky soul with her own hand, breaking one of India's major taboos. When not playfully interacting with those present, Amma habitually displayed the majestic dignity and 'radiant calmness' of her divine peace. Whether outwardly active or not, Amma was always enjoying the 'natural state' *sahaja samadhi.* This is the liberated status of being consciously one with all, completely free, perfectly established in 'the peace which passes all understanding'.

Despite her attempts to seem perfectly 'ordinary', Amma was viewed by thousands of people as an incarnation *(avatara)* of the Goddess. On special days, they helped her to dress up in the traditional garb of the Goddess, complete with crown, garlands and classic iconographic ornaments (such as the diadem, disk, trident, and so forth). Yet when a man exclaimed on one of these occasions, 'You are Goddess Raja Rajeswari herself!' Mother promptly assured him, 'You are also That! You do not differ from me! I am not anything which you are not!' Richard Shiffman elucidates this 'same-but-different' quality of Amma:

> It was impossible not to feel awed by her personality ....
>
> Here was someone who was the same as other people, and yet, at the same time, different, greater, deeper, vaster. This is something that I sensed very strongly. You might say that I knew it; but just how I *knew,* I did not know – it was entirely instinctual. Something awakened, something stirred in her presence, a faint nostalgia for the Infinite, that made one sense that there was more here than charm and graciousness and the charisma of a finely developed personality. There was a settled quality, an absoluteness; it looked

> superficially like poise or confidence, and yet there was something about it utterly unlike these qualities of the world. The words of the [*Bhagavad*] Gita came to mind: "Beyond hope, beyond fear... the steadfast sage." Just sitting and watching, something of Amma's settled peace worked on the mind like a balm. It was easy to understand why the Hindu scriptures say that at the feet of the sage the devotee finds a haven.

Anasuya Devi gave no discourses, but responded to people's questions regarding divine truth with short, pithy utterances. Sometimes these were highly paradoxical or enigmatic. In the same manner she had spontaneously taught her elders when she was a mere child. She had not received any schooling and did not read any scriptures (in her later, public life, people would occasionally hand her a book and she might skim it or have some passages read out to everyone present). Yet her replies stunned and silenced highly respected philosophers and spiritual teachers. On the liberating power of her pithy wisdom, Bharadwaja relates:

> When she utters a crisp reply to a query, the mind of the questioner is suddenly denuded of its narrow bounds ... and the mind is lost in its own infinite expanse...

> Mother's cryptic sayings give a paralysing shock to the very quality of the mind of being distorted into petty fixed patterns of ignorance... [Her sayings] dig themselves in at the root of the very phenomenon of mechanically accepting systems of thoughts... Her sayings are alive ... Like them or dislike them; accept them or reject them; but they do their work in your mind all the same... They never allow us to sink into complacency.

Amma's teaching is characterized by an unrelenting emphasis on 1) the immanence of God, as this entire world-play of forms, and God's transcendence as the formless; 2) a complete equanimity and contentment over whatever happens in the world; and 3) a non-dual devotion *(abheda bhakti or parabhakti)* toward God as the Cosmic Principle, with the realization that 'All is He All is His doing'. For a few ripe souls on the wisdom path *(jnana-marga)*, Amma

would tell them to take God's viewpoint: 'You are all, all is Your doing'. Yet on the whole, she was a consistent advocate of the 'Other-power' idea—as found, for instance, in Pure Land Buddhism—the idea that we are never ever the 'doer' of actions—the One alone who emanates this universe is the sole Doer of all actions. These words of Amma have the effect of eliminating the 'I/Thou' or 'me/not-me' split that characterizes most people's outlook, a dichotomy between an egocentric 'me' 'over here' and a 'God' and 'outside world' 'out there'; a dichotomy that brings untold suffering over frustrated desires, inexplicable injustices, pain, grief, and so forth. Amma maintained a theology of complete non-dualism—1) refusing to accept the notion of a separate ego agent with 'free will' and 2) not defining God as the 'creator, sustainer, Transformer' of the universe, but as the Universe and That inscrutable Unmanifest.

With her frequent emphasis on the complete immanence of God as the world-appearance, Amma overcame a traditional attitude among certain Hindu Vedantins (similar to the theology of Western religions) that tends to emphasize the priority of a formless, transcendental principle (*nirguna Brahman, Siva*/God, the Noumenon) over and above an 'unreal' play of phenomena. For Amma, God was so transcendent that He simply could not be found 'elsewhere' beyond or separate from his immanent aspect as the universe! For Amma, That is not separate from This: formless and form-full, *Siva* and *Sakti*, God and God-manifest-as-creation, are *one*. Therefore, she eschewed the distinctions employed by many Vedanta teachers and teachers in other traditions that promote the formless, transcendent Reality as 'more real' than the phenomenal world. This made for some unusual interchanges, unlike typical dialogues between masters and disciples in India or in the Judeo–Christian–Sufi world of the West. For instance, Amma in 1968 had this conversation with Marva Hemphill, one of her first Western devotees:

MH: Mother, tell me what God says (to you).

M : I do not see God anywhere. I haven't seen Him; you are God to me!

MH: Me?

M : I am not seeing Him. I don't believe that He exists (as some separate/being). You are God to me. That is all. Whichever object or person I might look at and with whomsoever I might speak—that is God to me. I have no desire to see Him for I have not felt that he exists (separately) ... You are not thinking that you are God, but I feel You heard it said that he is *in* all, but I feel He *is* All ...

MH: When all people worship you, What is your reaction?

M : I feel that I am one with them ... When I feel that the worshipper and the worshipped are one in essence where's the difference? God's creation is God Himself.

In short, everything Amma spoke actually revealed the ancient non-dual *(advaita)* Vedanta truth—*Sarvam Brahman, 'All this is* Brahman/God'. When perceived correctly, the world (This) is nothing but God (That) and need not be denigrated as 'not God'.

This attitude, incidentally, is virtually identical to the outlook of many Ch'an and Zen Buddhist masters (especially as found in the views of someone like Dogen Zerrji, the great thirteenth century Japanese Soto Zen Buddhist master) who refuse to make a mental distinction between a Buddha-principle separate from and underlying a manifest appearance. In the spirit of the early Mahayana Buddhist work, the *Hrdaya (Heart) Sutra,* they realized that 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form', that all processes are Buddha-nature, and that, in the final stage of true spiritual realization, 'mountains are

mountains and rivers are rivers'. This is perfect 'full circle' enlightenment—'just like this'.

Because of these views, Amma (like the Buddha and the Ch'an and Zen masters) never advocated any 'inward and upward' strategies of other-worldliness or life-denying asceticism. True renunciation, she would sweetly assert, is 'love for all'.

This 'World is God' doctrine is *panentheism*, the perfect theological blend of transcendental and immanent principles. It may sound to some Western ears as merely a form of pagan *pantheism*, giving licence to all manner of immoral indulgence. However, *panentheism* is a supremely balanced theology, and we must remember that, in Amma's presence and under the influence of her profound counsels, people spontaneously adopted unattached, uncomplicated, virtuous, godly lives of joyful service to one another.

In keeping with the notion that we are not separate ego-agents with free will, but that everything is happening according to the Divine Will, Amma rarely gave anyone any 'advice' on 'what to do' in order to become spiritually realized. At the most, she would simply recommend that an individual equanimiously and joyously experience whatever happens, painful or pleasurable, and regard all manifestation as *Sakti,* God's power. If one is meant to undertake a specific spiritual practice, the Divine *Sakti* will see to it that this happens. Otherwise, if the *Sakti* does not so ordain, all the 'trying' and 'willing' can only bring an egoic sense of frustration.

At the highest level of seeing things, a grand paradox prevails: people come to the spiritual Master with great sense of dilemma that something is 'wrong', that they are not enlightened, not pure enough, not fulfilled, not happy. Yet the real Master knows that everyone's true identity is pure Spirit, absolute Being-Awareness-Bliss, not affected by the play of the personality, the body, the world-events. Thus, a true Master is not interested in 'changing' or

'improving' anyone. Such was the case with Mother. She regularly undermined people's sense that something was spiritually wrong with themselves, and brought them to a place of contentment and peace with What is, the Will of God as manifested in whatever is happening in the world appearance (including one's own mind).

Now, most fortunately, it seems to be a universal law that whenever one lets go of *trying* to change something and simply *flows* contentedly with whatever is arising, then the previously judged 'sinful' or problematic' situation sooner or later spontaneously rectifies itself. Therefore, in getting people to stop negatively judging themselves and trying to change themselves, Amma helped them to let God—the sole Reality—transform everything into more Godly fashion. (Thus the saying, 'Let go, let God'.)

In line with this as already suggested, Amma always reassured people that they need not do any arduous spiritual practices since the Divine *Sakti* was doing everything to accomplish their God-realization. (Once in a while she would identify herself with this *Sakti*, saying, 'I will do everything'.) Be that as it may, some of her 'children' regularly chanted a *mantra* to the Goddess using her name *('Jaya Ho Mata Sri Anasuya Raja Rajeswari Sri Paratpari')*, and they sang devotional songs *(bhajans)* or performed traditional, ceremonial rituals *(pujas)* to her image on their own altars. Some devotees read scriptures; some practised a natural self-enquiry, aided by her profound utterances of non-dual wisdom. Many folks engaged in these forms of spiritual discipline reported that such practice happened spontaneously under Amma's influence, without their having to make any heavy effort. Even more remarkable is that some devotees abided naturally in the awareness of the Love *(prema)* that Amma embodied, no longer feeling the need to be involved in any specific spiritual practices. They were no longer maintaining the problematic sense of being a separate self. Amma, true to her word, had helped them to dissolve their egocentricity in this infinite Oneness of Love. They now simply abided as That.

Amma's sole daughter, Hyma, was one of those who became established in this highest state of real spiritual freedom. Born in 1944, she had been a very sickly child, suffering from chronic headaches. The fact that Amma did not heal these but advised her to regard them as her 'friends' indicates that even for some of those people very close to Amma (and for Amma herself, who was chronically ill the last several decades of her life), the way of divinity was not a physically easy one, but something which requires at least a minimal effort in detaching from ordinary physical comforts. Despite her mother's all-forgiving nature, Hyma's humble heart led her to feel rather ashamed of her lack of perfection. Deeply devoted to her own mother, Hyma worshipped her in solitude as the Divine, doing pujas to her image. Amma predicted that Hyma would be merged in the Absolute and 'be the Reality itself', and would herself also come to be worshipped by devotees. This in fact came to pass, and devotees venerated her as 'Chinna (little) Amma'. They were particularly impressed by her compassion for suffering creatures and her readiness to serve all with a warmly tender, self-forgetting love.

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Devotees were fairly certain that Hyma would eventually be the successor to her mother. But, as destiny would have it, she contracted small pox at the age of twenty-five, and, though it seemed she might recover, Amma knew otherwise and stated that Hyma was soon to leave the mortal plane behind. (One sees here the inexplicable ways of destiny: Amma would save other women's children from disease and death, but not her own child.) Hyma did indeed pass away, on 5 April 1968. Amma, in the spirit of the Zen master who 'sleeps when tired, eats when hungry, laughs when happy and cries when sad' did not suppress the tears of sorrow that came upon her daughter's passing. But soon Amma returned to her usual equanimious state, and performed an act of spiritually energizing Hyma's lifeless body as a sacred form a yogic process known as *prana pratishtha.* After this ceremony, the consecrated body was buried, and a shrine (the Hymalayam) and life-size statue were

erected on the spot. Amma had declared: 'Hyma has not gone anywhere, she is here with us,' and so as Amma had predicted years before, devotees now venerate their sister Hyma as an abiding angelic presence who is helping them Godward.

The unfolding years brought more changes. In 1966 *Matrusri*, the monthly journal edited by Dr S. Gopalakrishnamurthy, et al, was begun, which would come to feature many of her sayings and doings testimonials by those who had been drawn into her orbit and selections from the scriptures. In honour of Amma's fiftieth birthday, 12 April 1973, 150,000 devotees gathered to worship the Divine in female form. Amma personally went around to be sure that all were fed, 'filling them with Her Bliss'. Shortly after this, Amma made some extensive tours of other districts in Andhra Pradesh state, visiting schools, hospitals, welfare institutions, prisons and private homes to bless all, rich and poor, young and aged, healthy and infirm, with her love. In 1975, Amma set out for Tamil Nadu state to the south. After seeing its capital, Madras, she visited the *asrama* of the famous sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi (d. 1950) at Tiruvannamalai (100 miles west of Madras) and also called on the senior and junior Sankaracharyas of Kanchipuram (official teachers of the Advaita Vedanta tradition). The year 1975 also saw some miscreants raid her *asrama*, in hope of stealing something. Mother attended to them lovingly, calmly remarking to her disciples, 'They are also my children. I have docile children as well as naughty children. A child is never at fault in mother's eyes. It is mother's nature to love her children equally, whether they are good or wicked'.

In 1980, an unusual sickness afflicted Amma. Accompanied by many devotees, she came to Hyderabad for a two-month-period of medical treatment. Her return to Jillellamudi was spectacular, marked by joyous throngs of people at every train stop. With Amma's help, a medical centre was made available for the poor, beginning in May 1978, and a residential, English-medium public school was opened

in the August of 1980. A home for the aged and sickly also came into being at Arkapuri.

On 16 February 1981, after years of wedded bliss, beloved Nannagaru passed away in God. The next day his body was interred in the recently completed Anasuyeswaralayam temple, Jillellamudi's first major temple, which had been in construction by Amma and her company for some years.

Amma herself laid down the body on 12 June 1985, the health of her physical frame having finally collapsed altogether. Two days later her mortal remains were interred in the temple. This temple has become a centre for continuous sacred activity, hosting various ceremonies and the continuous chanting of the divine names, including Amma's, all twenty-four hours each day.

Since Amma's return to Formless Light, her Divine Motherly Presence is still profoundly experienced. This is especially true at Jillellamudi on the feast days (her birthday, wedding day, Hyma's and Nannagaru's days of passing and the ten-day Dasara festival in autumn), when large crowds gather, and a massive food offering is made for poor persons in the region. Moreover, Amma's memory is celebrated at worship services *(pujas)* held at 'Matrusri' (Beloved Mother') centres throughout Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere.

Her devotees clearly know that Amma's real nature, Divine Love, has not gone anywhere, but is always, changelessly Here in all Her glory and power. As Amma herself has stated, 'Even without the body my work continues.' Devotees confirm, 'In this new phase her disembodied grace and force are at work moulding and remoulding, chastening and transforming the human nature into the divine nature. She is there ever present in the hearts of her many thousand children.'

Timothy Conway

Introduction

The appearance in the world of the truly unique individual, the one 'perfect' in herself, who never thinks of anything in the universe as being 'other' than herself, seems always to elicit from her fellow men a peculiarly ambivalent reaction: while some revere and worship her, others revile and persecute her. And the same ambivalence (moderated perhaps) is reflected in each one of us. Insofar as we believe that we discern, in her words and actions, signs that she has attained what we have ever yearned for, but never found—a life free from the anxiety of imperfection—we are drawn to her. Insofar as we seek to escape from our despair into rigid beliefs which we fear his spirit of freedom will destroy, we shrink from her. Though she may seek no recognition, the deepest aspirations and fears of men seem inevitably to focus on such a person.

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But whether men worship her, or revile her, she considers none to be 'friends', none to be 'enemies': she deals with all equally. She responds to all those whom she encounters—the outcaste, the king, the sincere seeker, the hypocrite, the sinner, the saint—without a thought for their social position, worthiness, or treatment of her, but, she asserts, solely according to the necessity. Her contacts with her fellow men encompass an extraordinary variety of levels and intensities of relationship. To sincere souls, who anxiously yearn for perfection, she responds with deep affection; to hypocrites, who proudly flaunt their pretended 'perfection', she responds with severe disapproval—and yet her response is always the expression of an unconditional, universal love which is natural to her. Like the good

physician, whether the medicine she gives is sweet or bitter, her treatment is always appropriate to the case. Some individuals may be so powerfully affected that they undergo what are often called 'spiritual experiences'—mystical, visionary, miraculous and blissful experiences, and experiences of repentance, forgiveness and redemption—in her presence. Perhaps it is love awakening in their hearts that strikes their minds helpless with wonder and awe. They cannot but think that their experiences are inspired by some mysterious power of her; but she categorically denies that she is personally responsible for any of their experiences, sublime or otherwise, for, she says, in this universe, only what must happen, happens.

Such a one cannot but seem a mysterious paradox to her fellow men: on the one hand she appears to be a limited person; on the other hand she appears to speak words and perform actions which express an unlimited identification with the entire universe. Those who yearn for her state, cannot but desire some explanation of it, but sooner or later, they cannot but feel the inadequacy of any given explanation. Whatever the scale with which they try to fathom her, she remains, to them, a living paradox: unique, yet universal; unreachable, yet intimate; merciful, yet inexorable; powerful, yet helpless; unknowing, yet wise; calm, yet passionate; agonized, yet blissful; changeless, yet fresh; playful, yet serious; majestic, yet humble; human, yet divine. And yet, she *is* herself—she has no need to constantly explain herself to herself. The contradiction exists for those who seek to understand her. Light presents a similar paradox to the scientist: under certain conditions it acts as though it is made up of infinitesimal particles; under certain other conditions it acts like an all-pervading energy. And yet, light *is* light. The contradiction exists only for the one trying to comprehend the nature of light. So, there seems to be an incomprehensible uncertainty inherent in the very nature of knowledge itself. In his anxiety to escape his uncertainty, man cannot but think that what he yearns to know is

'other' than himself, the knower; and yet all his attempts to gain certainty by acquiring more knowledge seem only to reveal still more uncertainty. Only the one to whom the thought never occurs that anything in the entire universe is 'other' than herself, seems to have escaped this dilemma.

In such a person the anxiety of imperfection and the yearning for some 'other' perfection have come to an end, and the world in which she lives absorbs her complete attention. She denies that she has any particular teaching which she can pass on to others. When that eternal truth is expressed in words it gets distorted, she says. Her life is her teaching: words are only one dimension of a total response to the minds and hearts of those around her. When words become necessary, the appropriate words are spoken; otherwise, silence ... She is never bored, for there is always something going on. Even her 'small chat' reveals aspects of the smallest events of daily life, which had escaped the keenest of observers. Her use of language is uniquely expressive: her words impress her hearers as being imbued with a vitality of feeling and subtlety of significance that could only be inspired by her own experience. With simple colloquial words, examples from common experience, and an abundance of good humour, she is able to explain the most esoteric terms found in spiritual literature so that even illiterates experience new meaning in them and relevance to daily life.

Words, she says, do not convey the feeling, they have no power to awaken the mind. But others may be so struck by a quality of universal validity which they discern in her sayings, that they come to regard them as having an authority equal to that of a revealed scripture. And yet she asserts that what she speaks comes solely from her own experience. She does not quote the scriptures (except to those who would quote them to him), because to her they have no authority. But that does not mean that she necessarily denies them, for they too derive from experience, she says.

She has no particular teaching to transmit, she says, for she is simply telling the answer which occurs to her when a question is put. Those who approach her to flaunt their 'learning' before her, she may silence with a single, short question, to the point and unanswerable. Those who approach her with questions arising from problems which have presented themselves so forcefully that they feel their very existence threatened, find that she responds in full measure: a sympathetic hearing, probing questions to ascertain the details, specific advice, material assistance to the extent possible, and intimations of an attitude of mind which can view the inevitable problems of life without anxiety.

Her visitors ask her a variety of questions deriving from problems encountered in the course of their daily lives and spiritual quests. To the same question put to her on different occasions by different people, she may give contrary answers. An answer which is fruitful (i.e., conducive to growth and contentment) for one man at his particular stage of life, may be unfruitful for another. To those clinging to unfruitful beliefs, she may appear as a sceptic, pointing out that their beliefs raise more and deeper questions than they answer; to those clinging to fruitful beliefs, she may appear to endorse their views. To those whose mental outlooks are unnecessarily one-sided, she may point out the other side. Thus it is that no two persons can agree as to what her 'teaching' *is*. It may appear that she is willing to say *anything* to dispel an anxious problem, but that is not to say that she speaks carelessly; she responds with no uncertainty, strictly according to the necessity, and her response is unerringly the appropriate one. Like a good physician, she provides the treatment which fits the particular case. Sometimes the appropriate remedial measure may be to stimulate enquiry at a certain level, sometimes faith. The intellectual past-time of elaborating an inevitably one-sided system of philosophy from certain assumed and unquestioned premises, does not interest her; the problem of life alone is what interests her.

The 'teacher' she points to is life—our lives, her life and life itself—that which is comprehensible, yet incomprehensible. In going to the root of each problem, she reveals, in a strikingly original way, the basic paradox life inevitably presents when we seek deeply to understand it. And we cannot but anxiously seek to understand it, unless what is totally incomprehensible occurs. If you like, this is her 'teaching', but, as 'teacher' Huang Po said: 'Morning and night I have explained to you that the Ultimate *(sunyata)* is both one and many. I have said this as a temporary expedient, but you are building up concepts from it.'

Perfection, love and truth are not what she possesses and can give to us, but rather, she says, something natural that life gives her. She *is* perfection, love, truth in life. She *is* imperfection, hate, falsehood, death. To her there is no 'other'. Morning and night she explains to us, 'I am not anything that you are not.'

'Amma'

A woman whose life bears the mark of her truly unique personality lived in the small South Indian village of Jillellamudi, and till today is known in those parts as 'Jillellamudi Amma'. She is addressed by everyone simply as 'Amma' (the Telugu word for 'Mother').

Questioner: *Who are you?*

Amma: Mother.

Questioner: *Whose mother?*

Amma: Everyone's mother.

Questioner: *What do you think of yourself?*

Amma: I think I am myself. I think I am the 'I' that has become all 'I's .... Mother is not merely the one sitting on a bed in Jillellamudi; 'Mother' means that which has no beginning and no end, that which *is* the beginning and the end, that which has become everything, and

which is incomprehensible—the limitless, resistless basis ... I am not a spiritual teacher; you are not disciples. I am not a guide; you are not travellers. I am Mother; you are children.

Questioner: *There must be some attraction for so many people to come here day after day. What do you say, Amma?*

Amma: (Smiling.) What special attraction is there? What attraction is necessary for children to come to their mother?

Questioner: *What is the uniqueness people see in you?*

Amma: It is known to them; not to me. How can a sweet dish know its own sweetness? It is known only to those who taste it.

Questioner: *Did your state of perfection develop gradually, or was it present at birth?*

Amma: I am not anything now that I was not earlier. I have ever been the same. There has been no change in me. If there has been a change, it has been in your understanding of me.

Questioner: *How do people view you?*

Amma: They view me according to their states .... The mind is the measuring rod; isn't it? In a yard there are inches, but in an inch there are no yards.... No one knows my measure; I am the measure of all .... My life is unlimited; my story is limited.

Amma has herself provided a detailed account (corroborated by others) of some episodes from the first nine years of her life*. She appears to be able to recall every word spoken in her presence since her birth, and all the relevant details if necessary.

She was born at dawn on the sacred eleventh day of the first lunar month—28 March 1923, by the English calendar—into a Brahmin family of small landowners in the coastal, rice-growing,

*Published in Telugu as *Matrusri Jivita Mahodadhilo Tarangalu (Waves in the* Ocean *of Amma's Life)* by 'Rahi', 1968.

Guntur district of Telugu-speaking state of Andhra Pradesh. It is said that signs (miracles, visions, blissful experiences), such as are associated in the Hindu scriptures with the advent of a divine personage, were witnessed by her devout mother, Rangamma, and her father, Sitapati, even before her birth, and also by those present at her birth and afterwards. The frail child was named Anasuya (free of envy).

For the first year and a half of her life Anasuya was suckled and raised by another woman, as Rangamma feared that her own milk was unwholesome. (Of several children, only one son had survived.) Rangamma once more felt able to care for Anasuya, with the assistance of one of her husband's aunts, Maridamma. This remarkable woman, a child-widow who had devoted her life to spiritual endeavour and to being of service to her relatives remained Anasuya's close companion throughout her childhood and youth.

At nineteen months Anasuya was found sitting in a yoga posture (which she had seen Maridamma perform), her breathing had suspended, and so absorbed was she that it was thought she was suffering from 'fits'. (Amma was to exhibit many such signs of extraordinary mental states during the first thirty-five years of her life. They were variously thought to be symptoms of epilepsy, hysteria, mental illness or possession by spirits, and she was subjected to drug treatments and exorcisms. Later they were more generally recognized to be states of *samadhi* [spiritual absorption.] Her elders were further worried when Anasuya ceased to digest her food. All the attempted remedies failed, the 'eating habit' had left her, and she never ate regularly thenceforth.

Rangamma died when Anasuya was four, yet she remained so calm, that her elders thought that she was too innocent to comprehend what had occurred. But she asked them why they grieved if they believed (as they said they did) that birth and death occurred at

God's will. She went on to imply that her mother was the ever-present and all-pervading Energy *(Sakti)*. Already, what little she spoke was cryptic and profound.

After Rangamma's death, Anasuya's father felt unable to care for her by himself and feared sending her to school, so she stayed for varying periods with relatives in different towns in the district. Most of the time she stayed with her maternal grandfather Chidambara Rao, a successful lawyer in the town of Bapatla (perhaps because of the deep reverence with which he regarded his young relative). He was a man of intelligence, with deep philosophical and social interests, and he and Anasuya spent many hours discussing philosophical and religious topics. He invariably found his learning silenced by her keen logic, simple analogies, and volley of searching questions. Her words and actions were a constant source of wonder to him, and he had numerous spiritual experiences in her presence. In his opinion, Anasuya had been in the state of perfection since birth.

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Amma asserts that she has been in her present state from birth itself. So complete is her sense of there being nothing other than herself, that she says, 'I think that "experience" means feeling, at all times and under all circumstances, that all is one .... I do not think that there is more than one experience'. And yet she has described, in her characteristically simple style, a number of what can only be called 'mystical experiences' which came to her in her childhood, in which she experienced her identity with 'the "I" which has become all "I"s,' or with 'the all-pervading Energy *(Sakti)* which has became everything'. But even they, we must say, were the expressions of a state natural to her (rather than its cause), which was *ever* expressing itself according to the circumstances and her stage of physical and mental development. At the age of four she was explaining the deepest teachings of Indian mystical philosophy to her grand-uncle, with the authority of experience. Unobtrusively, yet clearly, she was

expressing her identity 'with All' her universal motherhood. She was speaking words such as she speaks today but in these days they were, more often than not, ignored as the chatter of a 'precocious child'.

Amma's account of her everyday, childhood life is rich in encounters with all sorts of human beings, creatures and situations. Beggars, 'untouchables', criminals, scholars, devotees, dogs, pigs, snakes, trees—she was incapable, it seems, of regarding any as being other than her 'children', or of feeling any concern other than for their welfare. Though she rarely ate anything herself, she felt keenly the hunger of others, and would give away the meals meant for her to poor folks and animals. When the necessity arose, she gave away her gold ornaments and clothes also (to the dismay of her guardians). When she was a little older, she felt drawn to caring for infants and the infirm. So natural to her were such actions, that she never felt that she was giving anything.

Numerous persons had spiritual experiences in her presence. One ruffian, while robbing her of her gold necklace, was so struck by her gentle acquiescence and concern for him, that he came to revere her. If ever she felt it necessary to chide a hypocritical elder, she appealed, not to abstract moral principles, but to the natural goodness which she saw in him and in everyone, and which alone could redeem him. Devout worshippers of the Hindu gods, felt so inspired in her presence, that they had visions of her as their cherished deities. But whatever anyone experienced—whether sublime thoughts, anger, or tears—her attitude was that everything happened because it had to happen, and not because of her presence.

Normally, Anasuya was a quiet and retiring little girl, with a natural attitude of respect and obedience towards her elders; but if they ever tried to impose their prejudices and taboos on her, they found her utterly impervious to anger or threats. 'She looks as delicate as a flower, but her actions are as hard as rock,' was one aunt's verdict.

Few of her relatives seem to have noticed anything special about her: she was considered 'dull', 'odd', 'naughty' or 'impertinent', and was abused and neglected. She was rarely asked where she had been, or whether she had eaten. Hardly restricted at all, she was free to wander the streets, observing the goings-on in the houses, markets, temples and cremation grounds.

Anasuya had an enquiring mind, fond of experiment. One day when she was nearly five, wondering, 'Who is the God in the temple?' she entered the inner sanctum of the Bhavanarayana Swami temple in Bapatla and removed all the garlands, ornaments and clothes from the idol. She reasoned that the sculptured rock which she had uncovered, its garlands, ornaments and clothes, the offerings and vessels used in worshipping it, and even its sculptor, and these which were worshipped as God—all had surely been produced by the Earth. Anasuya spent the entire night in a state of mystical union with the Mother Earth: 'They are worshipping the things which originate and merge in you. Why are you causing them not to recognize you? No matter how they treat you, you provide food and shelter to all in your lap without discrimination. And yet who is there that recognizes your compassion? Your sacrifice and love are not for anyone's praise, but because it is your nature. All should worship thee alone.'

Though Anasuya never approached any gurus (spiritual teachers) for instruction, she happened to meet several. When the scholar, Kalyananda Bharati of Guntur, asked the six-year-old girl who she was, she replied, 'Do not know who I am, I have come to find out.' When he tried to induce her to learn a *mantra** from him, she showed him that his explanations were inconsistent. As they talked (over a period of three days), he realized with wonder that much was yet unknown to him, and told her that he would revere her as his goddess and would tell her people about her state and keep her with him.

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* Syllables to be meditated

When she asked him, 'You speak of my state, but do you know it?' he was obliged to admit that he did not, and she departed. When she was eight, a saintly devotee of Sri Rama, Vasudasa of Brahmanakodur, asked the motherless girl whether she wished him to bless her that all should love her. She replied, 'Please don't! Bless me that I should love everyone always, whether anyone loves me or not.' 'Why?' he asked. 'Only if I have love shall I understand it. What shall I understand if others have it?' 'All right, tell me what you want,' he said. Anasuya told him, 'I want to be without having to want anything.' At this, he gazed at her for five minutes without blinking and then cried out, 'Rama is Brahman!' When others asked him for an explanation, he told them, 'It is neither something I can tell you, nor something you can hear. In the future you will understand it yourselves from experience.'

As was customary, Amma was married, soon after turning thirteen, to Sri Nageswara Rao, the son of her father's sister (a not uncommon match in that community). Though her father might have wished her to marry into wealth, even during her childhood she had several times hinted at who her husband would be. The ceremony was performed in Chidambara Rao's Bapatla house on 5 May 1936. Again as was customary, the couple did not live together straight away. It is known that her 'fits' were causing concern, and that she was a patient for over a year in a Christian missionary hospital in the nearby town of Chirala. But she was not regarded as a patient; she participated with the nurses and doctors in all their activities and served her fellow patients tirelessly. It is said that she was revered as Mary or Christ by some.

The couple set up house together when the husband was appointed *karanam* (village officer) of a small village seven miles from Bapatla-Jillellamudi. Amma, eighteen years old and carrying her baby son in her arms, arrived in the village in April 1941. She has revealed little about those early Jillellamudi years, but the circumstances seem to have been far from enviable. They were the

only Brahmins, 'outsiders', in a backward and faction-ridden village. None of her own family visited her. And sometimes, when her husband was away on official business, unless her mother-in-law or a village man who became her devoted servant were with her, she was alone with her children. (She bore a daughter and a second son, though she conceived more.) She organized a 'grain bank' which helped the poor farm-labourers to tide over the jobless seasons.

Amma married 'to show that all states of life are the same', as she told one enquirer. An attitude of simplicity and modesty, and of dutifulness towards her husband and family, came naturally to her. The family had meagre means, so she wore simple cotton sarees and few ornaments, and lived for years in a dilapidated mud and thatch cottage. Though frail, she did all the usual village-housewife's chores, cooking, cleaning, making cow dung into fuel, tending and milking the cattle, and receiving visitors to the house and the village (as the *karanam's* wife), as well as helping the labourers in the tobacco barn. She ate little herself (for years, only certain leaves and the water in which rice grains had been soaked), and yet she carefully enquired as to the tastes of her guests, and cooked delicious meals. Some noticed the economy and efficiency with which she ran her household. She has said that the only Vedas (scriptures) she studied were the broom, the kitchen hearth, the mortar and pestle, and the winnower; and 'I thought that cooking food and making buttermilk was *sadhana* (spiritual practice), and that heating milk to the right temperature, so as to preserve it without spoiling it, was *yoga*'.

In 1949, Amma was taken to one Desiraju Rajamma—an old yogini, well known in Bapatla for her austerity, scholarship, and eagerness to initiate people into mysticism—to be initiated into a *mantra.* And yet it was Rajamma who had spiritual experiences such as she had never known before, initiated by Amma's constant enquiry into the meaning of her every word and the necessity behind

her every action; but still she clung to her orthodox dogmas and rituals. When she told Amma her *mantra,* Amma entered a trance for several hours after uttering only the first syllable. Rajamma asked a reluctant Amma to distribute her *mantras* for her to all who requested them. Some of Amma's statements indicated that she knew already that her period of relative anonymity was soon to end.

Amma escaped wide public notice for the first thirty-five years of her life, and yet, even by the early 1950s there were some persons in the surrounding villages who had noticed her uniquely calm and worry-free state and valued her company. Among them were Dr Veerayya, a physician who was called to examine Amma in 1952, and who found 'more symptoms of *yoga* (union with God) than of *roga* (disease)'; the pious Brahmin, Sri Yajulu; the learned Brahmin, Sri K. R. Sastry, who said, 'She is like a lone *tulasi* (sacred basil) amongst jilledu weeds'; Smt. Manikyamma, a devout woman who visited Amma in 1953 and felt that the humbly attired housewife was none other than Goddess Lakshmi; Sri Satyanarayana, who performed the first formal *puja** to Amma; and a spiritually inclined relative, Sri G. Lokanadham, who observed with bliss how fully Amma exemplified the Indian ideal of the 'devoted housewife'. In 1955 this man's wife was cured of her lameness after a visit by Amma, and the 'miracle' attracted much local attention. By word of mouth, news of Amma's existence spread out into the world. Increasing numbers began visiting Amma regularly, and several devoted women stayed with her and helped her with her chores, so that she could spend more time with her visitors. To those departing, she gave fruits and *kumkum* powder, or, otherwise, pieces of earth, which the recipients found (to their wonder) sweet and fragrant.

By the end of 1957, a dozen professional men from Chirala began visiting Amma regularly, sometimes having to brave floods which made the path to Jillellamudi hazardous. (A road was built in

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* Ceremonial worship (as is usually offered to temple idols).

1962.) They recall a special intimacy in those 'good old days': sharing food in Amma's house and sleeping around her bed. Amma's husband invited one Lakshmi Kanta Yogi to Jillellamudi to ascertain once and for all whether her trances were pathological or spiritual. When the Swami asked Amma if she had anything to ask him, she told him that she would learn nothing from him; nevertheless, he 'certified' her divinity and put an end to lingering doubts about her condition. Before dawn on a full moon day in early 1958, standing in the drainage canal which runs beside the village, Amma gave *mantras* individually to six hundred people, thereby fulfilling Rajamma's wish (and also heralding her emergence as the acknowledged 'mother' of a 'universal family'). From then on the flow of visitors steadily increased. In 1958 Sri Haridas and Smt. Krishnavennamma became the first devotee couple to settle in Jillellamudi (and they are still there). Later that year, the visitors set up an independent free kitchen *(Annapurnalayam)*, the first of several institutions* that have since grown up around Amma. In 1968 the first of foreign visitors arrived.

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Amma's daughter, Hyma, died in 1968. A selfless and sensitive girl who suffered greatly, she was much loved by Amma's visitors. (She always referred to her mother as 'our mother'.) Though at times, Amma showed the effects of profound motherly grief, she would allow none of the celebrations already planned for the following days to be disturbed on her account, and participated in them all. After performing the funeral rites, she shifted into the newly completed House of All. In 1970 an idol of Hyma was installed in the Hymalayam, a shrine built over her burial place.

After Amma had expressed the wish to see one hundred thousand of her 'children' eating together on her fiftieth birthday

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* *Andarillu* (The House of All), with rooms for visitors, and Amma's apartment on top; a printing press; a Sanskrit college; a shrine; a hospital; and an English-medium school.

(March 1973), despite the political unrest and the disrupted communications in the district, many more than that number visited Jillellamudi that day. She made extensive tours of other districts in the state, visiting houses, schools, hospitals, prisons and welfare institutions. At one place, more than a hundred thousand people sat silently for over an hour gazing at her. There were countless moving scenes during her house-to-house visits to slums, and her visits to the bedsides of the aged and infirm, and to a district threatened with famine. In 1975 she visited Madras (the capital of Tamil Nadu state), the *asrama* of the late Sri Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai, and both the younger and elder *acharyas* of the Kanchipuram Sankara Mutt. Since then she had rarely left Jillellamudi despite her chronic ill health—'I am the embodiment of chronic disease'—her daily routine was an almost endless round of meeting and talking with her many visitors, and giving advice as to the running of the institutions. Just as this was being written, she expressed the wish to see one hundred thousand infants, all in new white saree swings, at the same time!

Matrusri Digital Centre
Jillellamudi

Rodney Alexander Arms

Sakti and Otherworldliness

Our Helpness, Sin and Virtue

Questioner A: *I am losing my faith in God. If there were a God, would He remain indifferent to the present-day injustices and growing unrest? This is an enigma to me.*

Amma: It is something unknown to us, inscrutable. We think some Supreme Being, be it God or *Sakti* (Supreme Energy), guides our activities, don't we? It is our daily experience that we are unable to do certain things as we intended, and that we do certain other things unintentionally. Let us name the Power which brings all this about, if not 'God' then simply *Svabhava* (our inherent nature). Now, if you are losing faith in God, my child, it is enough if you sustain your faith in yourself.

B: Svabhava? *Please explain.*

Amma: Suppose you are acting with full faith in yourself: even then you are unable to do all that you wish. On the other hand, when you decide not to perform certain acts, you are sometimes made to do those very acts. This is due to *Svabhava.* I think that by *Svabhava* and God we mean the same thing.

C: *Do sin and virtue exist?*

Amma: Even though we may be able to recognize sin we are unable to desist from it and we are not always able to do what we consider virtuous. For us to do anything at all, the urge must spring from the *Sakti* within us. We behave as that *Sakti* impels us. Even in the case of a murderer, the sword in his hand, potent as it is against four

individuals, may fail to rise against a fifth. You may observe that some sinners prosper materially, nevertheless you don't feel like committing their sins. Neither sin nor virtue are in your hands.

C: *Are you asking everyone to act in whatever way his mind prompts him to act?*

Amma: Let him act differently if he can help it. He can execute a different idea only if it occurs to his mind. I think he can act only in accordance with the commands of his mind, and he doesn't know where those commands come from. He doesn't know where the desires upon which he acts come from, yet his mind feels satisfied when he is able to fulfil them and pained when he is unable to do so.

D: *If we can do nothing sinful or virtuous by ourselves, doesn't it follow that there is no need to try to resist evil?*

Amma: Even this attempt to resist evil—is it prompted by the mind, or by some special command from outside? I shall go a step further and put it thus: if you attribute all this to *Sakti* there is no problem; even if you attribute it all to *Svabhava* there is no problem. There is no need to believe in some invisible *Sakti*. Whether we think that there is no superior *Sakti* and that everything is caused by ourselves, or whether we think that we are helpless and that everything is caused by some superior *Sakti*, it is all right. We sow, we cultivate, we reap and we eat. There's nothing else.

D: *If we believe that everything is caused by our effort alone, isn't there the possibility we will become proud and conceited?*

Amma: In that case, should we attribute some parts of the universal process to ourselves and the rest to God? Then which parts are ours, and which God's?

D: *With the aid of modern science, man is gradually mastering many things previously thought to lie outside his control. If he masters everything, what will happen to God's role in creation?*

Amma: What can happen? The superhuman *Sakti* always prevails. Why talk of a remote future? Even now we find certain things being done which were previously considered humanly impossible. Just because these things have now become possible, can we conclude that there is nothing else to be achieved? No. There will be further achievements, and yet still more things will remain to be achieved. Creation, the unending process of becoming, can never be exhausted, nor can it fully and suddenly come into being once and for all. This palm-leaf awning for instance—could it take shape the moment we wished for it? It is part of creation. Some say the mind is God. If and when the mind acquires such power to create, verily it *is* God. What is learned and achieved through (material) things, we call 'science'; what is learned and achieved through the mind alone, we call 'spiritual'. But in either case the process of achievement presupposes a mental factor. That again leads one to conclude that the mind is God. When everything lies in our hands and our achievements are independent of any external power, there is no God separate from us. There's no problem if you attribute all activity completely to God or completely to yourself. This is what I said earlier.

C: *What have you to say about rebirth, the chain of successive lives, Amma?*

Amma: Rebirths are being talked about, of course. Nowadays some instances are being quoted in the newspapers as evidence for it. Well, if you think that there can be a chain of successive lives for the same soul, then you must agree that the very first life of the chain must have had some cause. It can only be the cause of the first life that causes all the lives, for if it is only the deeds committed in the first life that bring about another life (as is commonly believed), then the first life becomes the cause for all the remaining lives. So what causes the first life? I don't say that rebirth is impossible; I say only that it is not of our making. To sum up: one who believes there is no rebirth sees death through life; one who believes in rebirth sees life through death. (Laughter.)

E: *This optimism is good, Amma. But it is said that we reap the consequences of the evil deeds we hove done here, during this very life. We do feel from our experience that we are suffering on account of our past deeds in this life. Would you agree?*

Amma: What about the times when you don't feel like that? When you feel that you alone are the cause of your present experiences, it is pleasant; when the cause is felt to be inscrutable, there should also be no problem.

B: *Have any of your disciples been to foreign countries as missionaries, like Vivekananda?*

Amma: I have no disciples *(sishyas)*; all are my children *(sisus)* only. What these children do is determined by that *Sakti*. That which drives this whole creation is the same *Sakti*. *It* makes you write a story; *it* may make another attempt something else. *That* alone is the power that enables any agent to do anything. I don't think there is more than one such initiative.

F: *Why should God create pleasure and pain and all the other incompatibly related qualities? I mean, why not pleasure alone?*

Amma: Day and night are obviously both necessary. In the absence of relativity, there can be no creation at all. All the qualities we have are already there: I think they are derived from *Him* alone. They could not exist in us without existing in Him. It is just like a writer creating characters and providing each with what he or she requires. (Laughter.)

F: *What are your views about killing animals?*

Amma: To some, killing is simply intolerable. Granting that everything has life, where are we to fix the point where it becomes 'killing'? I am pained to see a cock killed. Whatever we can't bear becomes painful for us. It may pain you to crush a bug. There is always some killing or the other going on. We are unconsciously crushing myriads of creatures. One fellow kills pigs while denouncing another who

kills cows; the other fellow looks upon killing pigs as heinous. Isn't the life in either equally sacred? Whatever strikes us as painful we regard as 'killing'.

D: *But shouldn't you urge us not to kill animals, whether they be cows or pigs?*

Amma: I don't teach any 'dos and don'ts'.

B: *But 'dos and don'ts' seem to be the essential pre-requisites for* dharma *(morality) to take a definite form, don't you agree?*

Amma: I refrain from instructing you in such matters. Moral wisdom does not arise from instruction. Are there any moral principles that we don't already know? Shouldn't those we have heard be enough to reform our minds if instruction alone could achieve it?

B: *Nowadays people commonly set aside the dictates of their conscience and engage in improper deeds, allowing themselves to be motivated by self-interest. Then, to justify their mischief they join with others and raise high-sounding slogans, trying to lead the rest of society in their path. In this way the evil in man is growing to gigantic proportions. Do you concede the need to bring the misguided back to a spiritual life?*

Amma: Nowadays panic about the apparent spiritual degeneration is fairly universal. Even those who are degenerating are full of concern about the widespread deterioration of standards.

Suppose in my home I regularly practise religious austerities and constantly follow a spiritual discipline all the hours of the day, and yet, nevertheless, by virtue of my profession as a lawyer or judge, I undertake to argue or decide in favour of a case which I know to be unjustified. Now all that I am doing at home is strictly ethical and highly spiritual, and so to that extent, no doubt, I am God-fearing and faithfully doing my duty. But do I believe that my private religious activities mitigate my conduct in court? You can see

such practical inconsistencies even in the lives of persons deeply inclined to spirituality.

F: *After committing a wrongful act, can I atone for my sin by praying and confessing my mistake?*

Amma: Thereby it appears as though committing sinful acts and atoning for them are both in our hands. If it were the case that you could make your sins disappear by reciting a few *mantras* then you could indeed do both: to sin or not would be in your hands. Then which of your actions are you to control, and how? Any such control must come from your inner self. But you are unable to control yourself. That is why I say your actions are not in your hands. If you say that you can control yourself, then it follows that sin and virtue are in your hands. If you say that you cannot, it follows that something unknown is compelling you to act as you do. With that firm faith go on doing your duty.

Sadhana

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E: *Is* sadhana *(spiritual endeavour) feasible for women? The question arises because of the prohibition against teaching the Vedas to women.*

Amma: Well, you, I and other women are all in this very same world. I am doing the same work as you, and you are doing the same work as me. It is the lot of every human being, my dear. Endeavour? God is revealed to the eye of understanding through everything and every activity—even through the domestic chore of gathering cow dung and making fuel cakes of it. In my view there is no God other than *that* which exists already as all this (visible creation). I'm not endeavouring to attain some strange thing existing in some strange place beyond all this. Verily, all we see, all this beautiful creation is God. I don't feel that I have to close my eyes and seek to visualize something instead of seeing all this beauty revealed here before us. In my view, all of you, and all this appearing

to one and all *is* Reality. I never think of withdrawing my attention from this supposedly debased *Kali yuga* (age), nor do I think of keeping my eyes closed (in meditation) and attaining something somewhere else. As I indicated earlier, we may be able to think that God alone created all this, but we cannot readily understand that all this *is* God. This world isn't burdensome as far as I am concerned.

D: *Then don't you attach any value to the age-old practices of the great* munis *and* rishis *(sages and seers) who renounced the world, retired to the wilderness for the sake of solitude, performed austerities and attained communion with God?*

Amma: For me, this world is itself Reality, and there is no need at all to shut it all out in order to realize some Reality elsewhere.

D: *Is it through practice that one becomes mindful of God while one is engaged in the daily routine of mundane life? Did you adopt any particular* sadhana *or mode of enquiry?*

Amma: I didn't adopt any, but I don't say that it is wrong for you to adopt something. I don't say that this or that *sadhana* is great and pre-eminently suitable for one and all. Nor do I say that any particular mode of enquiry should be adopted because it is superior to others. Whatever is possible *(sadhya)* for someone is most suitable and valuable for him. Adopt whatever is possible for you. To each according to his urge. The mind itself is the *guru.* I don't mean to discourage you from effort and *sadhana.* When the urge to work and do *sadhana* arises in your mind, you can't do otherwise than endeavour and seek.

B: *Is daily prayer necessary?*

Amma: He has not come and asked us to pray. If and when you feel like praying to Him, pray when you don't feel like it don't pray. We shall do it when we feel like it, and stop when we feel like stopping.

B: *Suppose we adopt the course of performing our daily duties properly as they ought to be done. Is that all right?*

Amma: When it is recognized that *Sakti* does everything, what is there that you as such need specially to do?

Your own duty *(dharma)* is God to you. Some consider integrity and rectitude as God; others consider positive virtue to be God. One fellow considers the word God; another considers the innermost nature of things as God. Various terms are used for the same principle. We intend doing so many things that we regard as worthy, and yet, in spite of all our intentions and resolutions, peculiar circumstances always seem to arise which make it impossible for us to do as we would like.

E: *Did you come by your present state without doing any* sadhana*?*

Amma: For me there is no *sadhana.* But only the possible *(sadhya). Sadhana* and seeking arise only if it is thought that there is something other than all this (visible creation). I never think about achieving something that is not already here now. It gives me satisfaction when fodder is given to the cattle and they eat it. When the milk is churned I feel contented because the buttermilk can be served to many people. It gives me satisfaction to see you have your meals. I am pleased if you are well provided for. When a hungry dog comes to the door, if it is given food, I feel satisfied. In this way, all of you are the be-all for me. What we see is all. It never occurred to me that all this was a burden to be dispensed with. Seeking, whether otherworldly, metaphysical or spiritual, was not for me. I was never after anything.

Faith

D: *In our own state of Andhra Pradesh there is the well-known saint, Satya Sai Baba of Puttaparti. He says, 'I am God incarnate; have faith in me.' What is your opinion about this, Amma?*

Amma: None.

D: *What he says is: 'I am God; trust in me.'*

Amma: Those who would believe are told to believe. The non-believer will not believe anyway. For the believer there's no problem.

C: *But the followers of various faiths speak in different ways. How are we to know whom to trust?*

Amma: Whether you have faith in Satya Sai, yourself or me makes no difference. Faith itself is what is great. In my view, faith itself is Divine. When someone says that he or she is God, it isn't meant that you, the listeners, are different from God. Pleasure, happiness, salvation, heaven and hell are not beyond all this (creation). It is evident from experience that they are right here. The believer is contented, for his mind is at ease, and that is heaven. If the non-believer encounters suffering, it is experienced as hell. Thus heaven and hell are not strange worlds located elsewhere; their existence is a matter of experience. Faith is what matters. Even to have faith in the latrine is a great thing.

Why all this? Set your own mind in order first. If you have no faith in your own mind, even supposing that he told you to have faith in him, how can your faith be firm? Earlier you bowed to me in respect. I think the one bowing is greater than the one bowed to. I think you have paid respect to your own self. In this process of believing, who is the agent? Yourself. Who perceives Divinity in me? Again yourself. What you perceive, you are experiencing. Following this experience, a sense of satisfaction arises in you. Happiness, peace, bliss, and so on—they all arise within *you.* This (Amma) is just the catalyst for that experience.

For my part, I see the same thing in you all. All are my children. Each fellow is endowed with his/her own uniqueness. This one revels in X because that is her nature; that one revels in Y because that is

that one's nature. This son has been asking some questions—there is nothing wrong in asking—he puts the questions that have been bothering his mind. Krishna advised people to have faith in Him alone, but how many could really believe in Him? The fellow with faith pays no heed to his hardships. The fellow with no faith never thinks about it. Either of these is believing in oneself.

In this connection, recall the meaning of the familiar verse, '*Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu* ...' It asks us to consider the *guru* as Brahma, Vishnu, and so on. On studying it we learn that the Gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—represent the three fundamental processes in the cosmos: creation, maintenance and destruction. We find that Vishnu is identified with food, Brahma causes thoughts, and Siva transforms them. Why object to identifying worldly objects with Vishnu? Rice is Vishnu; doesn't it have the power to nourish us? In fact these three are present in all that we see and think of. Thoughts occur to the mind, action arises from thought, and creation from action; therefore, the mind is Brahma, isn't it?

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C: *If each one's God conforms to his beliefs and concepts, this gives scope for conflict of beliefs, clashes of interests and friction, for each person believes his God to be superior to all others.*

Amma: That is so. Each will view his God as Supreme or else, it would cease to be 'God' for him. For forms, limitations are inevitable; but the immanent *Sakti* is infinite. Let us consider one of the most concrete illustrations from life.

The devotee *(bhakta)* looks upon his God just as a mother looks upon her child. Let us not bother about the intrinsic attributes of God; what matters is how God appears to his devotee. Just as the mother grows fond of her child even if it is ugly looking, so the devotee develops steadfast attachment to his God. Devotion is the essence. In both cases, it is devotion alone that determines the intensity of the attachment; yet love for God is considered 'devotion' *(bhakti)*,

whereas love for a human being is considered 'bondage' *(bandha)*. We take the limited attachment to the finite to be a binding desire, and the unconditioned attachment to the infinite to be all-absolving Godliness.

Religion

G: *However, once a person has developed some faith he insists that everyone else should adhere to his belief.*

Amma: If only he knew his own religion thoroughly, he wouldn't do so. All religions are intended to speak of the one Truth. Differences of understanding and interpretation have arisen. We should follow whichever religion we are happy with.

Although we may taste a variety of dishes, if a fellow prefers one in particular, of course he tells others that they too should eat that dish as it is the most delicious.

D: *In that case, why should conflict and hatred arise?*

Amma: Such a one has nothing to hate.

D: *Christians assert that salvation can be attained only through their faith and they invite everyone into their fold.*

Amma: That is only for want of proper understanding, my dear! If they rightly understood the Bible, they wouldn't say so. It is simply that they don't understand the text. What else could be expected of such people? Consider, for instance, the saying: 'Love thy neighbours.' Having forgotten this golden saying of their own, what else will such persons come and preach to us?

Only if they understood their own religion correctly, might they be expected to understand ours. Our religion is not separate from the others. All faiths are one. Faith knows neither high nor low, so it cannot suffer from feelings of superiority or inferiority. For each fellow, his own religion is the best. Differences of opinion are possible. They arise between one devotee and another, one sect

and another. There is even conflict in one's own opinions. That is how things stand, child.

D: *How could all these differences arise when all the religions and sects contemplate the same goal for man, namely, salvation?*

Amma: Man eats mainly to quench his hunger, but at the same time he looks for variety in the side-dishes. The problem arises from this hunger for side-dishes. He doesn't object to having the same staple food, rice, day after day, but he does object to having the same curry every day. What is required is to change the dishes by adding different spices. Now all these religious doctrines are just like that. They are merely embellishments to the realization of the one Ultimate Reality.

B: *May I ask if you know that* Brahman *(Ultimate Reality), about which the religious experts speak at great length?*

Amma: I don't know the *Brahman* they preach about. I approached no one for sermons, nor did I listen to any, whatever they were preaching. To me, you and all this creation is the Supreme *(Brahma-padartha)*, as I have repeatedly said.

As far as that is concerned, spirituality is not in the spoken word. The Ultimate Reality, which Vedanta propounds, can never be spoken of; it can be understood by neither the speaker nor the listener. In the case of secular knowledge, there is the possibility that the ignorant listener may understand the speaker, but this (Vedantic Reality) can be known to neither.

D: *Do you like the group singing of devotional songs* (bhajana)?

Amma: I like all and everything—he who does nothing as well as he who does everything.

D: *The believer and the heretic?*

Amma: The total heretic is a full believer. Apart from words, he who has perfect belief and he who does not believe at all are just the same.

D: *The atheist, while constantly negating God, keeps remembering Him.*

Amma: What does he think God is, in order to say He doesn't exist?

D: *Those images with four arms and a crown ...*

Amma: Does he think that the 'God' of his concept doesn't exist, or does he think that God doesn't exist at all? Such forms (images, etc.) are only aids to focus the mind. The theist believes in them and goes in search of God. He derives satisfaction from his faith in God; the atheist derives satisfaction from his denial of God.

Customs

D: *You had no* guru, *nor did you follow any particular path. Why, then, are all these religious customs and festivals observed here?*

Amma: If you ask why all these ... I would say from my experience because we attach importance to an article for which we have a use, and we value a person when his contact is needed. Of course everything in creation is necessary, but we assign values according to our need of the moment. Even the leaf plate you eat from, which you throw away after use, is sometimes considered sacred. Our ancestors sometimes took a leaf like that and worshipped it. It was immaterial who had eaten from it. Even the leaf which we ourselves have used seems to us ugly and repellent; our need lent value to it. If the wind were to blow it on to us, we would bathe and purify ourselves; but when we choose to we adore it and pay homage to it. There are rites prescribed for every hour of every day throughout the year.

In each observance we single out particular things and honour the Divinity in them. When turmeric powder is in its tin we don't worship it, but when the same powder is used to make a certain sign on the wall we call it 'Poleramma' (Goddess of life) and bow

down before it. One fine morning we take out the kitchen pestle, ceremoniously wind a long thread around it and look upon it as symbolic of some deity, with the result that next morning (and every day) we treat it very carefully. I may not have observed any such customs, but I encourage others to observe them, for they do tend to impress upon the mind a respect for the value of things, including (such 'ordinary' articles as) the mortar and the pestle. They are the means of developing in our minds a sense of the Divinity of this creation. In this manner, in all the observances—sanctifying baths, chanting of *mantras*, and so on—are implied wholesome social relationships, insight into bodily functions, and spiritual *sadhana*, all blended into a harmony of daily living.

B: *Why didn't you adopt any of them, despite your deep faith in them?*

Amma: My elders didn't make me adopt them; that is all. I don't look down on them. Now suppose both cow's milk and buffalo's milk are available, but the child doesn't know which to drink. Then I, an elder, enter and say, 'My dear, drink the cow's milk'. In saying this I'm advising him on the basis of my experiences with milk. When I advise these dear ones to observe various customs, it proceeds from my experience, irrespective of the physical act. I don't consider one thing superior and another inferior. I have no objection to anyone's practice: one is as good as another. Although its value may not be recognized immediately, some day later on he comes to realize its practical merits and experiences new meaning in it. Of course, if you perceive the Divinity in everything, there's no need for these customs. Rituals drop away when you are firm in your faith that all is God. On the other hand, if you derive satisfaction from them, why should you cause yourself needless dissatisfaction by denying them? Yet they need not be done unwillingly, from a sense of compulsion, just because somebody has prescribed them. All observances, *sadhanas* and *yogas* are intended to lead to the same goal.

C: *Coming to mundane affairs, there are the political parties and the periodic elections. Now, if people come and ask you whom to vote for, what will you say?*

Amma: You needn't attend elections. It is just a customary routine. While on his way to rob someone, the robber prays for success in his attempt. While locking up his valuables for the night, the rich man prays for protection against theft. Verily, all this are the daily elections! Whenever anything is necessary for anyone, it becomes available to him.

D: *We see so many people visiting you. Do you remember them all?*

Amma: So far there has been no forgetting. Memory can be retained to the extent possible, my child.

D: *I know you won't forget, but I am concerned with whether we will stay in your attention.*

Amma: Certainly you will. The shepherd never loses sight of the sheep in his flock. (Laughter.)

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C: *Your words are full of innumerable meanings.*

B: *When Amma speaks it is as if she is a receiver. One wonders where that receiver obtains all these ... That Supreme* Sakti *flows like a great stream, just as the mighty River Ganga flows from the very summits of the Himalayas.*

D: *There is a peculiar difficulty in this context: you may speak some words, but when I pass those words on to others I may embellish them with some of my own and remove some essential elements. Won't that bother you?*

Amma: Not at all. That's what usually happens. Each person passes on to others what he himself has grasped—this one according to his reach, and that one according to his. There may be still others who try to conceal what they grasp. What do I lose in all this?

D: *But why should you allow your greatness to be concealed?*

Amma: Reported truth can't be eternal. Real greatness cannot be concealed; ascribed greatness can't last long.

C: *How is it possible for you to feed so many for so long?*

Amma: Everyone is eating his or her own food.

C: *We are eating because you arranged for it.*

Amma: The arrangements don't proceed from my personal self. Furthermore, suppose a person not destined to eat here arrives now. Even if all arrangements are made and the food is actually served, he cannot go on with the eating. Another may come and stay and, suppose he is asked to leave, he will not go however much they may pressurize him. Everyone eats the food allotted (by Him). If one feels that he himself arranges and feeds, it is a heavy burden.

B: *We hear that you have no belief in devils, ghosts, spirits and such phenomena but they are confusing to people like us.*

Amma: Confusion is possible; faith too is possible. I think that even the worst heretic, at times when he is rather worried and feeling utterly helpless, bows inwardly in homage. My greatness is immaterial. If you have faith in me irrespective of what I am or what I do that faith is your armour. When your faith has no reference to the state of the one in whom you have faith, then the strength of your faith is what grants you protection and happiness. What is protection, if not an acquiescent mind? One may have all manner of wealth and comforts, but if one has no peace of mind, one is in great trouble.

Furthermore, I feel that whatever may be the origin of all these atrocities and misguided ways in the present-day world, they must have come to provide us all with the opportunity to look within and reverently keep in mind that Supreme *Sakti*. I think that all this distress issues forth in order to enhance faith and to promote our turning, in fear and reverence, Godward. These troubles exist everywhere.

All That Is Seen Is God

Questioner: *Are God and the human soul different. Or is man himself God? Is it true that the maturity of the human mind is Divinity?*

Amma: If you ask, 'What is true and what false?' I say all that appears is true. We are using the name 'God'. For whom? For what kind of a being? We don't know what He is like. We don't know the meaning of that word 'God'. 'God' means what? 'Truth, Reality' *(Asalu)*. What is Reality? 'What is' is God.

In answer to your question, I say that man, you, I—all that appears is God. We hear it said that God is formless and invisible. 'God' means 'Reality'. What is Reality? All that is seen as objects—water, air, fire, light—isn't this Reality? They say, 'For these objects to have come into being, and to have become so many, there must have been some cause.' Did the forms come through God, or are the forms themselves God? All that appears is God. I have not seen a form that differs and is separate from all this which appears. Creation *(srishti)* is God. There is nothing other than this entire creation. Creation is that which has become many.

Q: *Is human life the highest form of existence in creation?*

Amma: I don't think that human life is the highest. It doesn't occur to my mind that one is higher and another lower. Is everything created for man's sake alone?

Man thinks; birds too have thoughts. If birds had no minds, how could they build their nests? Some birds can even be taught to

talk. In that case, what do you mean by 'highest'? Is it in intelligence? They too have intelligence, but we don't understand their knowledge. May be no snake could invent television; may be no bird could invent an engine; but if you look at it in that way, has mankind collectively invented anything? Birds and animals have their own ways of doing things. They can easily do some things that no man can. Can we fly as birds do? Even a fellow considered ignorant thinks of many things—a highly educated man may not have such thoughts. I don't think that one thing in this creation is greater than another. That is the miracle *(mahatmya)* of creation. It doesn't seem to me that the miraculous is elsewhere. All these are in creation itself. Only if you, I and everything is included, is it creation.

Q: *In some Hindu temples we see nothing but commerce.*

Amma: What you say is true of course. But when everything is regarded as God, there's no problem. The idol the surroundings and the temple walls are all made of the same stone. Do we pay homage to the stone, to the colours or to the artist? No. On seeing the idol we pay homage to the story it represents. If it holds a lute, we think it is Sarasvati (Goddess of Arts); if it stands in a lotus flower, we think it is Lakshmi (Goddess of Fortune). We respect sanctity *(madi)*, custom *(achara)* and culture *(samskara)*. We are unable to disregard all these and appoint anyone a priest, can we?

Q: *What is sanctity?*

Amma: Limits. Deciding to be like this on this occasion—being pure and making the mind pure. A bath gives some pleasure as well, and eating is necessary for the body. Bathing, sanctification, and so forth are for the mind. 'Sanctity' means 'the particular limits observed on this or that occasion'. Some consider that a flower, which has come from the ground, is unfit for worship if it is dropped on the ground. In creation there is nothing but *That*. 'What is' is *That* alone. In truth, you know, the image in the temple is the stone on which the sculptor sat while chiselling it.

Q: *In our country one must give bribes to advance even one step forward. When will the country improve?*

Amma: Perhaps it was always so. We have never been without problems. At any moment what is being undergone always seems particularly serious. Each age has the problems appropriate to its times—stupid customs in one period, slavery in a second, epidemics in a third, famine in a fourth, floods during a fifth—there is always some problem or the other. People are never contented, happy and smiling. We often mention those early times when Rama reigned; but even those days had their characteristic problems. All of us are bribing, giving and taking, so there is no need for any special mention. These problems, in varying proportions, are always with us.

Q: *Man preys on man in our present-day society, like snakes eat frogs, and the government simply keeps quiet.*

Amma: Only if all of us join together is there a government. We ourselves elected them to govern. Their minds won't change simply because leadership is bestowed on them.

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Q: *But they should be worthy of their leadership.*

Amma: No. I say we should retain their leadership. How can they know the little works we perpetrate? The cook should manage to cook without wasting materials, the server should serve without omissions and the eater should eat without throwing food away. You judge another according to your point of view. Someone may leave some food on his plate. It may not have been to his taste. Was it a defect in the cooking, in the service, or in his attitude? Each one of us thinks in a different way. The same applies to governments also.

Q: *Why don't the rains come when they should? The sun blazes and the hot winds blow. Why is it like this?*

Amma: There are proper times not only for the seasons, but for man also. Why can't man follow his *dharmas* (moral principles)? It

is so for nature also. Even we are parts of creation, just as the seasons are. As with us, so with them. Even we cannot proceed according to our *dharmas*. The intention is there, but it does not become possible.

Q: *You feed so many every day. What maintains this? Do you have any property or special powers?*

Amma: Property? None here. I feel that all of you are my property. Children are the mother's property, aren't they? Everybody gives whatever he thinks he can. Everything is going on without lapses. Aren't you feeding your children? You don't get children exactly in proportion to your capacity to provide for them, do you? It is your duty *(dharma)* to bring up your children somehow or the other. That for your part, this for mine.

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Sakti is One; Forms are Many

Questioner: *How did this creation come into existence? What is its use?*

Amma: *Sakti* (Supreme Energy) has multiplied and come into existence as all this. *Sakti* is one, but it has manifested as all the many different forms. It's characteristics have not diminished thereby. The *One* has become the many, therefore a quality *(guna)* which predominates at one place is less somewhere else. Consider trees: not all trees are alike; their qualities vary. The earth too is like that: trees that germinate here are different from trees that germinate there. Every spot has a different kind of ground water. In one yard you may find brackish water, and in the very next yard sweet water. But without this *vyashtitva* (division into parts), creation could not happen.

This (body) is *Sakti,* and this (bedsheet) is also *Sakti.* There *Sakti* exists as lightning, here as a hot taste; here *Sakti* is as a tree, there as a hill. You can get rid of neither the brackish water nor the sweet water. The whole of creation is the basis *(adhara)* for creation.

Why is God incomprehensible? Because *He* is all. The sole reason for *His* being beyond comprehension is that the whole of creation is God. Why is God comprehensible? Because there is nothing but God to comprehend.

Creation is natural *(sahaja).* Where is the question of its being useful to someone? We are all within this creation. To whom else could it be useful? The creation is useful to creation alone, for there is nothing apart from creation.

Duality is the Basis for Creation

Questioner: *What is the cause of sin* (papa) *and virtue* (punya)*?*

Amma: That which is the cause of all this universe and ourselves.

Q: *What causes our actions?*

Amma: That which does everything; call it 'God', '*Sakti*' or whatever you like. That which is the cause of this universe is itself the cause of our actions.

Q: *They say that a man's past, present and future lives depend on his actions. If the same God created everyone, why should there be such great differences between individuals?*

Amma : If in this universe the pairs of opposites—big and small, high and low—did not exist as two, there would be nothing, my child. If there were no individuality *(vyashtitva)*, creation would have no basis *(adhara)*. I think 'good' and 'bad' only mean 'big' and 'small'; and it is the same, whatever names we give to these dualities *(dvandas)*— 'like' and 'dislike', 'sin' and 'virtue', 'good' and 'bad'... I mean that the *One* has become many, and has come, therefore, as many varieties; that if there were no differentiation *(bhinnatva)*, there would be no creation; and that divinity is where there is the undifferentiating mentality. I feel that it is only natural *(sahaja)* that all this should happen so.

The question then arises: if neither sin nor virtue exists, why should one person undergo hardship while another does well? May not all do well? What is well-being in fact? Is well-being wealth or children? No? Then what is well-being? Perhaps it is everything happening according to our wishes. When it comes to well-being, even he who lives in a palace suffers, even he who has money suffers. If one fellow suffers in one way, another suffers in another way. Not everyone's sufferings are of the same variety. There are differences of degree to suffering. 'Well-being' means 'everything happening according to one's wishes'. If I want to kill somebody, but cannot obtain the knife, will I not suffer, even though the deed may be bad in society's view?

Q: *It is said that all have souls* (atmas), *and that each soul is born into a particular social situation by virtue of the* karma *(deeds) of its former lives. When* Paramatman *(the Supreme) alone is the source of all, why shouldn't all be equal?*

Amma: I mean that this fellow is not responsible for *karma*. If you ask why God should have created all these varieties—poor and rich, hardship and well-being and yet so many other varieties of sufferings such as—poor and rich, health and illness, good and bad qualities, the answer would be that had there been no duality, there would have been be no creation.

It's like this ... To cut one object, is not another object required? (Amma points to her footstool.) Though this object is here, to see it I am required. I have become necessary to cognize what exists, haven't I? If That had remained as one, I would not exist. When That assumed a form to see, when I became necessary, didn't It become two? The object and I are separate, aren't we? When this separation has come into existence, hasn't It become two? The stool is separate from the user of the stool.

Let us consider the five elements (*pancha-bhutas*: earth, water, air, fire, space). If It had remained as one element, none of this would exist. The One divided Itself and became the five elements, and simultaneously the qualities *(gunas)* originated, each together with its respective element.

Isn't there coolness in air? It includes water-ness, doesn't it? So too, earth includes water-ness, fire-ness, and so on. If each element did not include the others, all this (creation) would not exist. This (creation) is the combination of all. All are present in each element. If there were no fire-ness in water, water could not be heated, even with fire. Only because it has fire-ness can it be heated. Only because fire has water-ness can it be extinguished. What, in fact, is the cause for all these? It is a fact that qualities exist. What is

the basis of all these qualities? The question is: Why should they have become like that?

Why this question? I feel that it is only natural that all this should happen so. But I do not feel that this fellow possesses any sin or virtue. As soon as the thought 'I am doing' occurs to this fellow, he wants only to better himself, doesn't he? Even accepting the theory that experiences occur to this fellow according to his *karma* in earlier lives, to each earlier there is an earlier still, isn't it? If we proceed backwards in time like this, we find that someone who was the first one earlier. But in the very beginning, when this fellow had no existence at all, how could he have committed any sin? In fact, in the very beginning this fellow had no sin at all, did he? He has been doing only what has been given (him to do). He has been doing what that *Sakti* (Energy) gave. Where is sin for him?

Q: *But if we think that God is causing all that we are doing to be done, won't the attitude perhaps arise that we may do anything?*

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Amma: It arises! Inevitably it arises. Why? Because it is natural for that kind of attitude to come. If there were no varieties such as elephant and mosquito, there would be no world *(jagati)* and no progress *(pragati)*. These two—'seer' and 'seen'—*are* 'big' and 'small'. The thing which sees, and the thing which is seen—both exist. If the *One* remained as one, there would be nothing. When that *One* assumed form as 'another', *It* became two. Each thing, when seen by itself, is one only; but when both are added, one and one are two. It became necessary for these two to take form, therefore what is called 'differentiation' is *That* alone. Those two *are* this creation. Why? I feel it is natural. Some say it is *His* sport *(leela)* or *His* drama. Whatever name is used, to me all this is *That*. All this took form through the one *Sakti*. Sins and virtues are not man's. *That* through which all this universe took form has arranged

all these Itself. Call them 'sin' and 'virtue', 'good' and 'bad', or 'like' and 'dislike'—That alone!

Sakti in Many Parts is Irrecognizable

Questioner: *Why should that one* Sakti *has become so many parts?*

Amma: It must be said that, that is Its nature *(svabhava).*

Q: *Then why doesn't each part think that it is of the same* Sakti*?*

Amma: That same *Sakti* which exists everywhere, exists here. That *Sakti* is itself thinking of 'the one Sakti' and doing *sadhana* (spiritual practice). But our thoughts do not remain permanently. It is not difficult to think, but it is difficult for a thought to become permanent.

Q: *Why should it be difficult, rather than easy and natural?*

Amma: That one *Sakti* having become many, it has become difficult.

For example, so many photographs have been taken of this Amma. This Amma is in all those photos, but whereas one fellow likes one photo, others like other photos. By the time there are fifty photos, there are so many differences, and yet all are the one Amma's photos, aren't they?

Consider colours—white is the source of all the colours, but when yellow is seen, white is not recognized. Whichever colour appears, that colour is seen, but the source, white, is not recognized.

Questioner: *If there is only one impulsion* (prerana)*, why doesn't each person perceive it in the same way?*

Amma: The impulsion is one, but it is not possible to recognize it. For example there is the need to grow a crop—that is the impulsion. The changing works are the activity *(chaitanya)* of thought *(bhava)*. Planting the seeds, watering, manuring—the aim in all these is to cultivate the crop and then enjoy it. Although the endeavours are different, they all have the same impulsion.

Sakti is Changeless, Forms Change

All is Life

Questioner: '*A mind* (manas) *without divisions* (bhinnatva) *is Divinity.' From this saying of yours it is clear that a mind without divisions is possible. But the nature of mind is division, isn't it?*

Amma: Yes, duality is seen—division is there. To feel the Oneness in the duality is Divinity. Duality is always seen; it is mind that feels the Oneness.

Q: *Isn't feeling false* (asatya)*?*

Amma: My view is that there is only *Sakti* (Supreme Energy) and no other.

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Q: *Do you mean that what is lifeless* (jada) *is also part of* Sakti*?*

Amma: There is change everywhere; but it may take some time to understand this change. In my view there is nothing lifeless. You think this wall is lifeless. You think that rocks and stones are lifeless. Trees and plants grow and diminish, don't they? Going from one state to another is change. Even mountains change.

Q: *We think that only living creatures have Life* (Chaitanya).

Amma: Who knows whether rocks and stones have the *sakti* (capability) for thinking? The only purpose of conversation is to understand each other. Do you know the ideas in my mind? Do I know the ideas in your mind? When this is the situation, how can we know whether rocks and stones have the *sakti* for thinking? We are unable to understand even the animals, because their natures *(tatvas)*

appear so totally different from ours. But even insects have their family life and laugh and weep; though certainly they may not think about which sari to wear.

Q: *How can you say that even lifeless things have thoughts?*

Amma: In my opinion we don't know the change they undergo. Trees grow, blossom and bear fruit, but it isn't known whether they have minds or not.

Q: *How can you say that Life is everywhere?*

Amma: Consider the banyan tree. For it to grow, much time is required. Vegetable greens come up in just three days. I am saying what occurs to me. I am expressing my opinion.

Q: *Is there proof that there is Life even in 'lifeless' things?*

Amma: Nothing is lifeless. All is Life. A mountain breaks because its nature is to break. A rock breaks because it has the *sakti* for breaking. Furthermore, for that it must have some kind of Life. In the earth we find lime at one place, iron at another place and gold at yet another place. We are able to get so many minerals because there is change. If there were no water and air, what would be the situation? No Life for them? Everything in Nature *(Prakriti)* is our basis *(adhara)*. Buffaloes eat grass and yield milk, which we drink. Even pebbles and stones are necessary for us. If we want to keep some fruits in a basket, it is possible only when the basket has the *sakti* for containing and the fruits have the *sakti* for being contained: it is possible only when both the *saktis* are there. When it pervades everywhere it is called '*Sakti*'; when limited it is called 'mind'.

Q: *Could creation go on if there were no Life?*

Amma: 'What is' is Life. Tell me, what is Life?

Q: *That which produces thoughts. I feel that everything produced within the body is Life.*

Amma: That alone is thinking all these things, isn't It?

Q: *Can people move lifeless things simply by looking at them, or by volition* (sankalpa) *alone?*

Amma: That *bhava* (mental attitude) must come to the mind and become firm.

Q: *Is that the situation?*

Amma: Our elders say so. I may not do it, but can I say, therefore, that there is no such thing? (Amma points to a pair of sandals.) Only if the sandals have the same Life as the feet can they go along with the feet. A chair may not go along with the feet as easily as do sandals. So is there no Life in it? We are unaware of the Life in what is not useful to us. If the pen doesn't write, we think there's no Life in it. With differences more or less—Life is everywhere.

Q: *Is it possible to prove that Life is everywhere?*

Amma: Change is the primary characteristic of Life.

Q: *Can Life be unchanging?*

Amma: A flower blossoms. That change cannot be understood. Only after the flower has blossomed is the change recognized. A child grows under its mother's care. Even so, can the mother say how much he grows in any particular second? Even if it is watched every second, that change will not be understood.

Q: *Is there anything that doesn't undergo change?*

Amma: Nothing existing in a visible form is without change.

Q: *Is there a formless state?*

Amma: Formlessness can't be recognized. A desert has a form. The space between two hands has a form. Because you are there, it appears with form only.

Q: *There is only one thing* (Sakti), *therefore no change?*

Amma: I mean there is change in forms, but no change in *Sakti*. The thread has the *sakti* for tying, and the flowers have the *sakti* for being tied. The same *Sakti*; exists as both. If you ask how It is, it cannot be explained but only experienced.

Q: *How is that state obtained?*

Amma: When the time *(samaya)* arises you will get that *bhava*. Nothing is greater than Time *(kala)*, my child.

Change Is Incomprehensible

Questioner: *Births and deaths are happening every moment. How are they caused. Amma?*

Amma: Through change. Evolution is change, and births and deaths are included in it.

Q: *Can change be understood?*

Amma: We can recognize what changes—the bud opens into a flower but we cannot understand the blossoming itself. The growing is imperceptible. When we recognize the bud in its later form (as a flower) we know it has grown. *The incomprehensibility of change is Eternity*.

Every second there is change. A few seconds make a minute, some minutes make an hour, a few hours make a day, some days are a month, and some months are a year, but every second is important. After the lapse of a year we notice that the child has grown, but we do not know the process which produced the change. We know he is growing, but we do not know how much growth occurs in any particular second. We cannot see it however closely we observe. Change, perceptible and imperceptible, is occurring every second. That is why I say that each second is as valuable as a *yuga* (aeon).

If you so consider, change itself is birth and death. In this sense, birth and death are everywhere. By 'birth' I do not mean only your leaving the womb, but rather the appearance of any new quality. For example, the foetus developing within the womb, or a thought arising in the mind. By 'death' I mean the disappearance of any existing quality. The arising of a thought is its birth, and its merging into another is its death. Birth and death co-exist in every moment. Every moment we are dying and being born anew. Compare a nonagenarian with a newborn baby—the old man once had the same skin. Human beings are changing every second, and it is incomprehensible. And some things change less in a century than others do in one second.

I feel that change is God. We know the baby alter his birth; we do not know how he was before. Within moments we find changes in the newborn child. He seeks milk. To move the tongue and suck comes naturally. We cannot understand the changes the baby undergoes. We do not know why he cries when he is born; even later we don't know whether an ant has bitten him or whether he has an aching stomach. And age is no help we cannot understand what even our neighbour is thinking, can we?

The 'Opportune Moment'

Q: *You often mention the* taruna *(the ordained or proper moment; opportunity).*

Amma: The *taruna* is the particular time for a particular event to occur.

Q: *Why do you say the* taruna *arrives?*

Amma: The reference is to a particular event. The daisy doesn't open its petals until the *taruna* for flowering arrives. There is a *taruna* relevant to that. Every event has its relevant *taruna.*

Q: *Does the* taruna *form of its own accord, or through the impulsion* (prerana) *of* Sakti*?*

Amma: If it were to form of its own accord, there could be nothing like a *taruna* for its formation, could there be? It becomes the *taruna* only when formed through the impulsion of some agency unknown to us. We say it arrives spontaneously. There is a moment for the rice in the pot to boil. Whether you use a fire or a gas stove, the boiling has its appropriate *taruna*. In each case the *taruna* arrives at its proper time. It isn't meant that years need to roll by. Even in saying 'Amma', 'ma' follows 'am'; and the interval between 'am' and 'ma' is the *taruna*. When you say, 'It happened', you mean that its *taruna* arrived; when you say, 'It *is*', the *taruna* isn't involved at all. When someone says, 'Amma is in the hall', time is implied for the speaker and the listener, but not for Amma.

Q: *You are beyond comprehension.*

Amma: Not 'beyond', but rather 'the basis' *(adhara)*. The universe *is*. There are *tarunas* for you to see and to say, but what you are seeing is.

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Q: *Does everything exist of its own accord?*

Amma: Yes. What is all around us is *Sakti*. *Sakti* is One, yet It exists in all these various forms. What we say is, is as plants, trees, planets ... We give It such names as '*Prakriti*' (Nature), '*Sakti*' and '*Daiva*' (God).

Time Is One

Amma: I feel that Time *(kala)* is One. Suppose a hall is partitioned into three compartments. To him who cannot simultaneously perceive what is happening in each of the compartments, they are three. To him whose perception is not limited by the partitions, they are one. It does not seem to me that Time is divided into three (i.e., past, present and future).

Questioner: *Darwin says that mankind evolved from the monkey; our scriptures say that God alone created man. Which is true?*

Amma: I say that God, man and monkey arrived in the one Time *(kala)*.

Q: *You have said that the* tri-kala *(past, present and future) do not exist.*

Amma: There is only one Time. 'It happened', 'It is happening' and 'It is going to happen' are separate states, but Time itself is undivided. There is a future for the one who does not Know, but what is there for the one who Knows? For the one who Knows, all is Present.

Q: *The source* (mula) *of causes and effects is the one Impulsion* (prerana). *Does Time have a source?*

Amma: When you think that whatever exists is That alone, that It became everything, then where is the question of there being any so-called 'source'? Somebody is writing with a pen. The paper has the *Sakti* to take the letters and the pen has the *sakti* to be held. *Guna* (quality) itself is *Sakti*. You can speak of a *guna* without an object, but nothing exists without *gunas*. Everything is *Sakti* alone. The hand has the *sakti* to hold and the pen has the *sakti* to write.

Time always is. We ourselves differentiate 'past', 'present' and 'future' states. You went to eat, you ate and returned. Which Time? You blink your eyes. How does mathematics describe that Time?

Q: *All that has yet to come is future. Having manifested in the present, it goes into the past.*

Amma: There is a Time beyond the reach of mathematics. That Time cannot be recognized. The bud is opening into a flower. We do not understand that change. We know that it has grown, but however carefully we watch we can neither see nor understand the change occurring in every moment.

Q: *Is Time beyond experience?*

Amma: Time limits itself; it is not beyond experience. In Time you asked and I replied. How much Time has elapsed? That which we can control, keep in a clock and compute is not Time.

How can it be said that there is no order to Time? Everything is happening as scheduled. 'Order' does not mean 'everything happening as we wish'. Suppose I get fever, my child. When I feel hot I need to uncover myself. But the *dharmas* (inherent natures) of things continue to act, so how can I say, 'Time is behaving improperly towards me because I have got fever'? I feel quite hot; I have a burning sensation inside. People with such a burning sensation (naturally) crave for coolness. If there were no hot winds during summer, there would be no basis *(adhara)* for the rainy season. If there were no rainy season, there would be no basis for the winter season. Time does not submit to the wishes of individuals; it has the entire creation in its view.

Suppose a child is born today. The surroundings he requires are not the same as those required by a seventy-year-old man. A forty-year-old man requires still different surroundings. On the whole, Time proceeds only one way; it never alters its course. You apply castor oil to a baby's body and then cover him with a cloth; another child is given bath; some other fellow must be treated in yet another way. We give lentils and curry to one who can digest that food; to this fellow we give only milk. We do not feed all alike, do we? One who is born must grow, and one who has grown must die. Time proceeds taking all into consideration Although people experience it differently, Time is one. There is not a separate Time for each person.

Forgetfulness Is Death

Questioner: *The ability which you have to remember your children is wonderful. Even among so many—who came, when*

and whence, the situation, what was said, who gave what, what they wore and did—you remember all the circumstances if necessary. This is a superhuman trait.

Amma: What is superhuman about it? Some ask in wonder, 'Amma, how can you remember so many of us?' as if it were something unusual; but if you consider me your mother, what is so unusual about my recognizing my children? In fact it would be unusual if I did not recognize them. Doesn't a mother recognize her children? Can you forget your children? I can recall who asked for what, their capabilities their behaviour and circumstances everything. Remembrance co-exists with forgetfulness, but this remembrance is not of memory; it is the natural longing of a mother for her children*. Not that I gave birth to them, but I view them with that *bhava* (mental attitude).

Q: *You have said, 'Forgetfulness itself is death'.*

Amma: Yes. When a new thought arises the previous one disappears. Suppose you were seventy years old, could you remember everything that had happened since your childhood? No. Only those important incidents which have impressed themselves on your mind are remembered. There is change from moment to moment, but only when that change is great enough can it be perceived. The change which is going on every moment can be understood. There's nothing in nature that doesn't undergo change. Change is the inherent nature *(svabhavs)* of Creation.

Q: *Even a small conversation with you goes very far.*

Amma: This Creation includes both combination and separation, addition and subtraction—this itself is mathematics. It may be expressed in letters or in numbers. However much there may be to mathematics, it is all included in the ten digits. Any number of sciences are written with simply the letters of the alphabet. However much

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* In Telugu, literally 'sweetness of the womb'.

change there may be, its description cannot go beyond the limitations of language. *Bhava* is primary; language is secondary. Letters are the basis *(adhara)* for language, and sound for the letters. Air has the property of producing sound, but only if it interacts with something else. All this Creation is the One becoming many. 'What is' *is* That. For me this Creation is sufficient.

Determination

Q: *You said once that the* taruna *(ordained moment) is a debt* (rina).

Amma: What I meant was: this fellow is indebted to that fellow, and that fellow is indebted to this fellow; and suppose it goes on and on in this way, where does it end? Even assuming rebirth is a fact, who is born indebted to whom? Is it indebtedness if we take what we need and have no intention of repaying? Is it indebtedness if I give of my own accord and for my own sake? If somebody gives of his own accord, is it a gift? What is a gift? What is a debt? What is the difference? If giving of my own accord and for my own sake is a debt, what will happen to all these gifts and offerings (which Amma receives and distributes)? It is a gift if you give up the hope of getting something in return. They say that if I give to you in this life, it must be because you gave to me in a previous life. When will this chain be broken? How is the indebtedness cancelled? Only by a change in *bhava* (mental attitude). To a fellow with the *rina-bhava* (debt mentality) the *taruna* is a debt. That *bhava* won't go unless the *taruna* arrives. The *taruna*, not indebtedness, is the cause for everything. One is not indebted to another. In my opinion, when the *taruna* comes he gives (for his own sake). Only when the right moment *(samaya)* comes does it happen like that. Without a thought I give to somebody (for my own sake); without fear I take them near me. Why? Because all are my children.

Q: *You say: When the* taruna *comes it happens. Do you mean that something not existing now is coming?*

Amma: If something not existing now in our experience, comes on another occasion, we call that the '*taruna*'.

Q: *May it possibly not befall us?*

Amma: It does not seem so to me. What is to happen is happening. The *taruna* is not for just one event; it is the *taruna* for all events. The *taruna* is the moment *(samaya)*, Time *(kala)*. Whether something happens or does not happen, is up to the *taruna* alone.

Q: *Is* nirnaya *(decision, determination) different?*

Amma: The same *Sakti* that created you determines all that happens during your lifetime. What is determination? What cannot be altered, the unchangeable, what happens without fail. Everyone's every action is determined. If doing were in our hands, would there be suffering?

Q: *They do say that everything has happened as pre-determined.*

Amma: Suppose we raise a child and he dies; we probably think that it was determined so. We think that future events will happen as determined, and from our experience we think that what has happened was determined. When the right moment arrives it cannot be escaped. Unable to escape and compelled to, we commit mistakes.

Q: *Even He that determines is said to be bound by His determination. What does this mean?*

Amma: Time ... *Sakti* multiplied. Within this multiplicity one object did not become another. A tree is not the ocean: the ocean did not become a tree. That is bound by that restriction.

We cannot adequately express how things are, so analogies are necessary. Language and knowledge were always there. What is new in what I am saying?

* * *

Questioner: *Was all that happened in Creation pre-ordained at some moment in the remote past, or is it ordained spontaneously every moment?*

Amma: Creation is what goes on every moment. There is nothing but change.

Q: *Do you mean it is ordained spontaneously?*

Amma: Past, present and future do not exist: it is all Now—hence the question does not arise.

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Questioner: *What is* nirnaya *(determination)? Who determines for whom?*

Amma: It isn't as though *Sakti* determines; the determining is itself *Sakti*. It isn't as though everything was determined once and for all at some moment in the past; determining is going on every moment. All that exists is *Sakti* alone. Being all, nothing obstructs It, and It does not heed to the wishes of individuals.

Q: *Can* Sakti *intervene in events in one's life?*

Amma: All of life's happenings are that *Sakti*, so It cannot be said to intervene in just one or two particular events. Sometimes a fellow may see something happen and think that *Sakti* has specially performed that action. When the unexpected happens, he thinks *Sakti* has done it. Suppose a fellow is on his death bed. The doctor's opinion is that he will not survive the day. If he recovers, he attributes it to the intervention of Divine grace. That is only a conjecture.

Destiny Alone Is the Path

Amma: In the primordial *spandana* (throb of creation) everyone's path was determined. Just as the inherent nature *(svabhava)* of water is to be wet, so the nature of that *spandana* is to take many forms.

Destiny *(vidhi)* is God because Destiny is unavoidable. Destiny manifests as *vidhana* (the Path, the course of events, regulation). Destiny is God *(Brahman, Paramatman, Chaitanya Svarupa, Chaitanya).* It is *spandana.* The change due to this *spandana* is Creation. Every moment it is happening. What is happening is the Path. That is why I say that Destiny alone is the Path.

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The Real and the Unreal Are *Sakti*

Creation Is Eternal

Questioner A: *Vedanta states that this visible Universe is unreal and that Reality is changeless and invisible. But we are unable to deny the reality of this visible Universe and to visualize that invisible Reality, so we go on struggling.*

Amma: I think that all this which appears (This) is itself Reality (That). True, what appears may change—in fact it is changing, not changeless. When they say that Reality is changeless, do they mean that there is something other than all this?

A: *Is the Changelessness the basis* (adhara) *for the changing?*

Amma: You may say it is the basis.

A: *Are there two then?*

Amma: Change is visible to the eyes. The 'Changeless' is a concept. The mind thinks that there is something changeless.

Even time *(kala)* ... Time cannot be seen, can it be? Even time changes. There is nothing independent of time. Nothing in a visible form is without change. What does not change is *Svabhava* (inherent nature); what changes is *bhava* (state of mind). *Bhavas* pertain to thinking. *Bhavas* are what come and go; *Svabhava* is changeless.

Sakti (Supreme Energy) is changeless; *rupas* (forms) change. Although It may exist as different forms, *Sakti remains Sakti*. If we take a vesselful of water from the ocean, the water in it takes on the form of the vessel, but it is the same ocean water. When *Sakti*:

becomes a visible form, it changes. What is in time is *Sakti*. What is in this Hibiscus flower is *Sakti*. The flower wilts, but the *Sakti* remains the same. When *Sakti* assumes a form, changes are seen. Change too is real.

I say: All This is That—the two are the same, not different. This which appears before us—his alone is Reality. I do not think there is anything other than This. I haven't seen it—I may not have been able to see it but This is always appearing. Even when we go, this Universe continues to exist. When you feel, 'I have seen Reality', This doesn't appear at all unreal.

A: *They say This only seems real.*

Amma: I'm telling you my experience—to me This looks real and eternal. Look at that tree: it exists, though it may grow taller and thicker. Forms may come and go, but this Creation has existed from eternity. It is not as though it began at some moment: it ever was and ever will be. Isn't this what they say of Reality?

B: *They say that the* Kali yuga *(age) began five thousand years ago and that it will end with* pralaya *(universal destruction), after which Creation will start anew. Is that going to happen, Amma?*

Amma: Change itself is destruction. We may not recognize it as such, but every second there is destruction. Why push destruction to a remote date, mistaking it to mean something disastrous? Creation and destruction are together. There is no *pralaya* other than change.

A: *Even the Vedas describe Creation as beginningless and endless.*

C: *Amma, there's a slight difficulty here. When you say that all that is visible is Reality, it implies that there must be such a thing as unreality, whether apparent or hidden ...*

Amma: My thoughts are changing. One thought having come, another is going. Thoughts come and go. Those that happen and

those that don't happen both kinds occur. Which are unreal? A thought comes to me; it doesn't happen ...

A: *Then it's unreal, isn't it?*

Amma: ... another thought comes. These thoughts are God. If *spandana* (the throb of Creation) is God, then not only the unreal, but even the real, are both God. While saying that Reality is other than all these, they are saying that Reality is what exists always. This implies that something non-existent exists, doesn't it? Does 'Reality' mean 'what exists always'? Does that word have that meaning alone? What does not exist? The body is going, they say. The body undergoes changes and goes. We know that the body will go and that we shall go, but we are striving because we recognize that This will continue. We earn money and lands for our children, knowing that we shall not live for ever to enjoy them. We shall not enjoy them, but in every work we do there is the recognition that those who come after us will. Why should we do all this if the Universe were illusory *(mithya)*? Men come and men go, but this Universe always exists.

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A: *Is it possible to say that change is the manifestation of* Paramatman *(the Supreme)?*

Amma: As you like. That is your faith. As for me, I have faith in this visible Creation alone. There is no *Paramatman* separate from This. This change is also *Paramatman*. According to the saying that there is not even a needle point's space where *Paramatman* is absent, all must happen solely within Him. Deaths, births, lives, *pralayas* all are He. What is different from Him? Is there anything?

A: *Nothing.*

I Don't Say All This Is Illusion

Amma: I say the Universe is real. I don't think '*mithya*' (illusion) means 'non-existence', but rather 'change'. Everything that exists changes. From the changeless arose what changes.

Questioner: *What is new in the Vedanta which you teach, Amma?*

Amma: Amma is not aware of any Vedanta in her words. What is it she says as Amma? Amma becomes apparent as Amma, that is all.

They are saying, 'This is *mithya.*' I say, 'Start with. "This is eternal".' There is nothing else different from all this appearing before us. They think that if This goes, something else (That) will come. I say, '(That is) This alone.' They say, '(That is) not This.' But what did Sri Krishna reveal to Arjuna as being His form *(visvarupa)*? Just these rivers, mountains and valleys. Did he see anything besides This? To start with '(That is) not This' is only to understand finally 'This too is That.' To me this visible Nature alone is That. This Creation always exists. This Creation is itself beautiful.

I say all religions are one. Haven't many different practices arisen within each religion? The different religions are just like that. The doctrines of Sankara and Ramanuja (renowned teachers of Vedanta) conform to what I am saying. Sankara's doctrine (i.e., *Advaita*), the Gita, the Bible, the Koran—I agree with them all. All appear the same to one who practises; they appear separate only to one who asserts his ideas without evidence. Don't all religions have the saying, 'Love all'?

'You' and 'he' is *dvaita* (duality). Amma sees you and him as One—that is *advaita* (non-duality). *Advaita* is That which becomes All. That which is incomprehensible. Although the way I express it may differ from the way others have said it before, the *bhava* (mental state) is the same. They say, '(That is) not This. That is elsewhere.' I say, 'That is This only.' The doctrine I express is the essence of all religions. Here all religions, all doctrines appear united. The inner doctrine of Vedanta is 'All is One', but how many equivalent forms it has transformed into! Even if they appear separate to Sankara and Ramanuja, to me they are the same. The religion without 'mineness' is agreeable to all. I do not feel that there is something which is

ours and something which is God's—to me, all that exists is God's alone.

I don't need to make any adjustments, my child; everything suits me as it is. All that Sankara, Ramanuja and Gaudapada said suits me. Not only that—even science suits me. Science explains what exists; *adhyatmika* (mind, spirit) is the basis *(adhara)* for things to manifest. What is within reach is called 'science'; what is out of reach is called 'God'.

The principle behind this Creation is that He becomes all these. This principle is applicable to all—to the atheist, the scientist and the spiritual man. God is *Sakti.* It isn't as though He wears a crown and has four arms. That *Sakti* has divided itself into many.

I don't disagree with any doctrine; I know how to make use of them all. I agree with the fellow who says there is no God. Why? Because he hasn't seen Him. Atheism and theism are the same. Having formed some concept of God, the atheist says that it doesn't exist, whereas the theist says that it does. Both are *bhavas* (mental attitudes).

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Form alone is the basis *(adhara)* to understand the formless. The stories of those with bodies—Rama or somebody else have become our basis. Now we worship them. Even though we may consider them to exist for ever, it appears they have done nothing after leaving their bodies. Is there any account of Rama's deeds after he left? We gave them the titles 'Teacher' or 'Great Man', but we cannot give them a title equal to their greatness. Their appearing to us in our meditations may be simply our imagining.

What I say is ... how important the body is! They say that what goes is *mithya* (illusory), but their understanding is itself based on what goes. They say, 'The Universe goes. The Universe is *mithya.*

Understand That which is eternal. The body goes, therefore it is not That.' With their mouths they are saying this. This physical body is itself the basis for their words. Their doctrine has bound their hands and feet so that they cannot move.

In their view this body is of no importance, yet it is only through the bodily organs of action and through *sadhana* (spiritual practice) that the undivided *Sakti* is gained. *Sadhana* is the effort of the *sakti* existing within the limited form of the body to understand that it is the same as the unlimited *Sakti.* The *sakti* in the body is itself what understands that supreme *Sakti.* The purpose of *karma kanda* (actions enjoined in the scriptures) is to awaken *jnana* (wisdom) through action. *Karma kanda* and the mind are bound together. All the rites, observances, sacrifices and offerings of worship are only for the sake of seeing God everywhere. Custom, hygiene and spirituality are not separate.

In youth we can do many things that are no longer possible in old age. 'Therefore,' they say, 'take heed!' They say that the body can do *sadhana* and remain in that state only if it is sensitive, and that *brahmacharya* (abstaining from sensuality) is useful for that. From this you can see how vitally important this physical body is. The body is the very basis for you to exist and to understand. Only through this physical body can you understand that indestructible *Atman.* 'Therefore,' I say, 'this body is itself *Atman.*'

When *Atman* is what is spread everywhere, how can I say that this body is not *Atman?* Whatever exists is That. Every object is That alone; only the forms differ. Because of their situations and functions, different names became necessary.

Brahman and *Maya*

Amma: They say that while *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality) remains detached, *maya* (*Brahman's* illusive power) alone does all this. Is that true? Isn't all this due to His impulsion *(prerana)*? When that is

so, why say that *maya* conceals Him? He thought movement was necessary and so He is producing movement. If you think, 'Whoever God may be, He is doing everything,' then nothing more remains. If you think, 'Nobody is doing anything; all this is natural *(sahaja)*,' then too there are no more questions.

I don't say all this is *maya* (illusion). All this is His volition *(sankalpa).* When He is the Cause, why does He appear as duality? In order to help us to feel the Oneness of 'what is', they said that we are experiencing what doesn't exist as though it exists. (They said, 'All this is *maya,* non-existent.') How could it be so? If my foot hurts, how can I believe that the pain does not exist? If I am very hungry and you are eating, what meaning is there in your telling me to think that my hunger does not exist? When it is said that all is *leela* (God's sport) or *maya,* those are not the words of experience. If you put it to them in these simple terms, they don't answer. If you believe in the scriptures, then you may not accept what I said just now, but that this entire Universe is in His hands you must accept.

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What we do not understand we call '*maya*'. *Maya* is not feeling that He alone performs every action. *Maya* is not separate from Him; *maya* too is He.

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I have not seen *Brahman,* but I do not feel that He is different from This.

This Universe is not like the snake which is superimposed on the rope in the well-known example; it is the becoming aspect of *Brahman. Brahman* is changeless, but He can change. The Universe is His changing aspect.

Questioner: *Our scriptures say that* Brahman *has neither name and form* (nama-rupa) *nor volition* (sankalpa).

Amma: Isn't '*Brahman*' a name? That which is spread everywhere has form—not one form, but all forms: He has no unique form, so they call Him 'formless'. In the Gita, Sri Krishna says, 'All names and forms are Mine.' Since He himself became all forms, He has no separate form. Is He therefore formless?

All names are His name.

All volitions are His volition. Has He therefore no separate volition? He is not volitionless; He has volition. His is volitionless volition.

Q: *Volitionless volition?*

Amma: Without opposites He became both. There is freedom from attachment *(raga)* when the duality is not felt.

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Amma: Space *(akasa)* is emptiness. Space means 'a formless state which itself takes on form'. This formlessness they call *'Brahman'*. All these successive changes in form ultimately end in formlessness. Space is that which has form and no form *(rupa-arupa)*.

Scripture and Experience

Questioner: *Scripture rejects what you say.*

Amma: Is scripture such a thing? Can it reject some things and accept others? Did scripture originate by itself as did Creation, or is it written by individuals?

Q: *No. It is written by sages on the basis of their experience.*

Amma: Isn't experience a part of this Creation? I think that papers, pens, thoughts and reasons are all That.

Although Reality is the same, there are differences in feeling, aren't there? They will see according to their state. Isn't the mind

the scale? They measure within the limits of that scale. But whereas there are inches in a yard, there are no yards in an inch.

Reality is beyond expression. It is not to be explained; It is only to be experienced. What arises within oneself is experience. Will we get that experience even though we read any number of scriptures? We cannot escape what we are destined to experience: our efforts are futile. What is to happen is happening. He gives every experience.

In the absence of experience, even wise sayings are merely our talk. And when we fully understand all that is happening to us in daily life, where is the need for scriptures? Words are not necessary to know the heart.

With our mouths we are unable to express what we have experienced. When put into words the truth gets concealed and we say something else; the hearers understand something else again. Words won't take you to the goal. You are of one nature *(tattva)* and I am of another. What can I tell you? Whatever man does is for his own satisfaction. If it pleases you, listen; otherwise don't.

There's No 'Other' To Attain

Questioner: *Vedanta teaches that to cease from sorrow* (duhkha) *is to attain the highest Bliss* (ananda). *What is the highest* prayojana *(use, benefit) to what you are saying?*

Amma: The highest *prayojana* is right here now, not at some other time and some other place. You are in It every moment. *Brahmatva* (the state of Reality) is not somewhere apart from this Universe; it is This alone—the feeling of It being constantly here ... Feeling is not different from perceiving. If the experience arises, no doubt remains, uncertainty is unknown. When delusion *(bhranti)* ceases. All is That alone. *Jnana* (realization) is cognizing 'what is' as it is. Consider anything—that bag for instance. Thinking the bag to be something else is thinking like an *ajnani*; cognizing the bag as the bag is thinking

like a *jnani*. *Ajnana* (ignorance) is cognizing 'what is' as some other kind.

I say all that exists is That. Whatever I see I feel that This is That. Whatever is experienced is This; That is not experienced. 'What is' is This. Finally All is That alone.

Q: *You reconcile everything that same way.*

Amma: Because 'what is' is One; there is no 'other'. The obstacle is your thinking that there is some 'other' to attain. When your doubts are cleared, when you arrive at that state where you understand that there is no 'other' to attain, that is *mukti* (liberation). It is not mere thinking; that *bhava* (mental attitude) must become permanent. When the *bhava* which arose within becomes steadfast, uncertainty ceases and there is only the one state. That is *tripti* (true contentment). *Tripti* is the state of feeling 'There is nothing beyond This.' *Tripti* is *mukti*.

Q: *They say, 'The* advaita *(non-dual) state is attained,' don't they? Who attains?*

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Amma: What is the meaning of that word 'attaining'? Is it 'becoming what was thought'? 'Becoming attainable'? 'Coming to an end'? Until that *bhava* arises, there is effort. But that *bhava* is not attained; it is bestowed at the *taruna* (opportune moment) by the impulsion *(prerana)*. There is no question of worthiness: when that *taruna* arrives even the worthiness for *mukti* arises of its own accord; so even that cannot be attained. Yet to those who do not know it may appear to be the result of an individual's own effort. The impulsion is *Sakti*. We cannot do anything unless the impulsion comes. Effort is wanted to see that unlimited *Sakti* in a limited form (the body mind).

Q: *The whole difficulty is with the mind: it will not remain stable.*

Amma : That is its inherent nature *(svabhava)*. That is why the thought to attain something and the search for some *sadhana*

(spiritual practice) are there. Everything is within. Because you are always thinking about something beyond your reach, it appears as though you have no stability. When the *taruna* comes, when time forces itself upon you, everything becomes available to you of its own accord.

I never think that I have attained some state. I have only the one *bhava*. Herein there is no feeling differently; everything is the same. No one thing seems important; everything has the same importance. Everything is natural *(sahaja)*. When there is that constant *bhava*, what more is to be desired? No difference then between these and those; verily these are those.

So long as the Oneness is not felt, It is perceived as two. In the same way, one thread appears as two when threaded through a needle.

Your *bhava* is that the thoughts which occur to you are different from those which occur to God. I say that all kinds of thoughts are God's alone. When it is said that both our volition and His grace *(days)* are necessary, I say volition and grace are one and the same. If He has no qualities then this fellow too has none. One fellow came here lamenting that he had discovered some bad qualities *(gunas)* in himself, and asked, 'Can even these be Divine?' On that occasion I told him that he would not have them unless He too had them.

Through my words courage and steadfastness arise. This is so for him who denies everything as well as for him who affirms everything. I tell only what I think, what I feel, what I see. There is no necessity for me to verify whether what I say agrees with the scriptures or not.

Q: *For particulars about actions and their consequences the scriptures are our sole authority; but not for you. How should we reconcile what you say?*

Amma: Scripture doesn't give the experience; the experience gives scripture. There is no necessity that I should say only what is in the scriptures. There is no necessity for me to verify whether or not my words accord with the scriptures. For me experience is primary; experience is the only authority. Scripture is what suits everybody: it must suit me, you and everyone. Foolish lines of counsel won't suit all. Speaking follows experiencing.

Q: *Amma is giving a new doctrine beyond* Dvaita, Advaita *or* Visishtadvaita.*

Amma: Why must you think, '*Advaita*'? Where is a separate doctrine for Amma? I do not think that I have any doctrine or religion. I do not know whether a fellow who thinks, 'All that is seen is That,' is an *Advaiti* or a *Visishtadvaiti*.

Q: *You are* Brahmatattva (*the Truth of* Brahman) *itself.*

Amma: (Laughs.) If you have understood that I am *Brahman*, what more is to be asked? I do not know what *Brahman* is; I only know that you are all my children.

Q: *What is the mystery of Creation?*

Amma: Creation is not mysterious; Creation is plainly visible.

As It Is Viewed, So It Appears

Questioner A: *If as you say, all this Universe is Reality* (satya), *where is the unreality of which Vedanta speaks?*

Amma: In my view, nothing in this Creation is unreal. We say that a falsehood is unreal. If something exists or happens and the mind imagines it to be something else, that imagining one thing to be another is what they call 'delusion' *(bhrama)*. Imagining one thing to be another is unreality.

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* *The three Vedantic doctrines (Dualism, Non-dualism and Qualified Non-dualism) founded by Gaudapada, Sankara and Ramanuja.*

They say that having seen a rope in the dark, your imagining that it is a snake is delusion Does 'delusion' mean 'imagining' alone, or does it mean *'maya'* (cosmic illusion)? They say that just as 'snake' is attributed to the rope, in the same way we are attributing reality to the Universe. They take the saying, '*Brahman* is real; the universe is *mithya* (illusory)', as their basis.

If there is a snake, it may seem to be a rope. Or a rope may seem to be a snake. The rope is real; the delusion is unreal. Imagining something to be something else is what is unreal. But my child, this is so only for he who knows both snakes and ropes; he alone experiences delusion. If he knows only snakes or only ropes, there is no delusion for him: he who knows only ropes will take even a snake for a rope, whereas he who knows only snakes will take even a rope for a snake—neither will experience any delusion.

If a snake comes in front of a baby, he grabs it and plays with it. He plays with a rope too. Can we say that he knows nothing? He knows how to grab an object which he sees, and he knows how to crawl along with the snake, only he does not know that it can bite. Can we say that he has no intelligence? Even adults do not know the characteristics of some animals. They too have neither fear nor delusion. 'Delusion' means 'attachment' *(mamakara)*, 'imagining'. Delusion is the belief that the One is actually two. Whatever it may be, the way in which you view, it is the way it appears.

Similarly, if you take this Creation to be real, then it is real; if you take it to be unreal, then it *is* unreal. Problems arise only when you have two thoughts about it—when you are not certain whether it is real or unreal. When the Oneness of everything is felt, *maya* does not appear at all. When you see the One everywhere, there can be no more doubt. *Maya* is seeing the duality of Creation without feeling its Oneness. That is where problems arise.

A: *Is delusion partial perception?*

Amma: That alone.

A: *But he may think that he knows the entire truth.*

Amma: Why does he think that he knows everything? He will always be aware of his lack of knowledge.

A: *But he doesn't know what is lacking.*

Amma: He doesn't know, but the question is whether his mind will be stable. Will his mind acquire certainty unless he comes into that state?

Your idea is that in so far as he is unaware of what is beyond, he will be contented (with what he already knows), isn't it? That is all right in a way; you can say that too. When he is studying in the primary class, so long as he is unaware of the next class he will think that his stage is final.

A: *Even if he thinks that way, he will still feel his incompleteness, won't he?*

Amma: That's what I have been saying. His mind will itself tell him that it is not complete.

B: *How does the way Amma sees Reality compare with our view of it? For instance, there is this wall here.*

Amma: As a wall only! While recognizing this wall to be a wall, it is realized that this wall is That, that Reality which has become every object. Objects are real all right, but Reality is not an object.

B: *I want to see things as they really are.*

Amma: How do you know that what you are seeing is unreal? If you understand that you are unable to see 'what is' as it really is, then you must know what should be seen. In fact that itself is *jnana* (wisdom).

When you know what should be seen, the fact emerges that this entire Universe is formed from one *Sakti* (Supreme Energy), though It has become many forms. We are unable to perceive birth and death as the same: birth makes us happy, whereas death makes us grieve. Though we may think that whatever is born must die, we actually observe that we experience grief. This is so not only for you and me, but is said to be the case even for *Maha-avataras* (great incarnations of God).

I don't think there is anything other than this visible Universe (This). By this I don't mean that this visible Universe is not God, or that what is visible is not God. This exists in union with That. The effort to know something other than what is visible is only to learn finally that there is nothing other than This. We begin by assuming that This is unreal, only to conclude that all that is seen also is real. When Reality is Known, all that is seen also becomes real; but until that Reality is Known we will continue to think of all This as unreal.

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Amma: 'Spiritual' is heads, and 'worldly' is tails. Both are true. How can this be? Consider a newspaper. It has both front and back pages. Opened out, they appear to be one page; folded, they appear to be two. So, according to your standpoint, one side or the other appears real. One fellow thinks that Reality is behind all This, whereas another thinks that This is all there is. Both are the same to me. When they say there are two, I unfold it and say there is only One.

Atman–Anatman Enquiry

Amma: Because we are unable to understand what is so plain they ask us to separate out the particular *(visesha)*. The particular is what they call *'anatman'* (non-Self). While saying that there is nothing but *Atman* (True Self), they are telling us we must separate *anatman* from *Atman* to find out what *Atman* is. In fact they are

not two, but in order to become firmly convinced of this fact we start by assuming that they are two.

For a fact they are talking about *anatman,* but they are doing so only to dispel the apparent difference. Where is *anatman?* In fact it doesn't exist. But to initiate the search it is said, 'This goes, this goes!' (i.e., 'This changes, therefore it is *anatman,* unreal.') Where is it going? It isn't going anywhere; it exists like that. Change too is real. There is change, but there is nothing like *anatman.* If *Atman* is understood, you won't perceive any *anatman.*

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Questioner: *Amma mikes only the one statement: 'All that exists is That.'*

Amma: Whatever you are calling 'That', this Universe is itself that You say there is still something more—I say even that is This. There is nothing except This.

They say *Atman* is what is changeless, formless, all-pervading and beyond the reach of experience. They tell us that in order to understand *Atman* we must regard everything that goes, as *anatman.* Everything that exists changes. Thinking, 'What is *Atman*? Not this, not this!' is *Atman–anatman* enquiry *(vicharana).* Ultimately, they say, we will understand that there is no *anatman* at all, but until then we must go on thinking, 'Not this. Not this!' They are saying on the one hand that we should begin our quest for *Atman* by regarding all we cognize as *anatman*; they are saying on the other hand that there is not even a needle point's space where *Atman* is not present.

They cannot say a thing about *Atman* unless they have experienced It. They have only verbally understood that there is no *anatman*; they are not firm in their understanding. They are speaking so even though they have neither understood nor experienced *Atman.* Their own words are an obstacle to them. Their opinions

and experiences have become hindrances, just as the clothes we wear hinder our movements. Shouldn't they say what they mean by '*Atma-sakshatkara*' (Self-realization)? What is it like? What is it that they have experienced and called '*Atma-sakshatkara*'?

I have never said that *Atman* does not exist, but we do not see *Atman* as a separate entity. We say that *Atman* is formless—so all-pervading that we cannot put even a needle point anywhere without touching It. How then can we claim to have seen *Atman* in a form?

Q: *You say that* Atma-sakshatkara *arises in one's* bhava *(mental attitude).*

Amma: '*Sakshatkara*' means 'appearing', so how can they say that *Atman* is formless? Having specified an individual form for *Atman*, when they perceive that form they are saying they have had '*Atma-sakshatkara*'. I say that they are perhaps considering *Atman svarupa* (the real form of *Atman*) to be such and such, and then, considering That to be the form which they perceive, they are applying that name.

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You think of *Atman* as within some light or idol; I consider that whatever appears is *Atma-sakshatkara*. All Creation is *Atman svarupa*. From this generality you select some form which you consider special *(visesha)* and you go on and on worshipping it. In this way you experience the all-pervasiveness—that form appears everywhere. So, having taken the special from the general, you have again made it general.

Q: *What is it they are calling* 'Atman'?

Amma: They say that *Atman* is indestructible, neither growing nor decaying, invisible to the eyes, eternal, unattached. They say *Atman* is That which is far and near, incomprehensible, beyond reach .... They say *Atman* is formless. Then in what way does *Atman* exist? 'Formless' means there is nothing except *Atman* that is the only

reason for that term. *Atman* is That, than which there is no other. That is why I say what they mean by *'Atman'* is that *Sakti* which has become All, and which is as all forms. That alone is as everything that happens, every action ... That is why it is not possible to define It as a particular thing. Being unable to say, 'That is such-and-such.' I am saying, 'All is That.' 'Being unable to say' means that I never feel That to be other. That mysterious 'something' which they take to be the source of all This, *is* all This. That which pervades everywhere and to which they give the name *'Atman'*, I call *'Sakti'*. It is not sitting away off in some corner: It has become everything. Even the expression, 'It is in everything,' means that It became everything. Not that It is only inside forms; forms too are That alone. That *Sakti* which pervades limitlessly everywhere, they call *'Atman'*; that *sakti* which exists within the confines of the body they call *'pratyagatman'* (the individual). They say that *Atman* is without *upayi* (individuality); I say *Atman* is All, including *upayi*.

There are not the two, *Atman* and *anatman*. The feeling that All is *Atman*—when that *bhava* (attitude) becomes firm it is *Atma-sakshatkara* in my view. Then all things are viewed equally. Whomsoever and whatever you see, hear or touch, That alone appears. There is nothing other than That. Whatever is formed from *Atman-Sakti* is *Atman-Sakti* itself. I think you are the *svarupa* (embodiment) of *Atman*. All that appears is Its *svarupa*. There is nothing that is not *Atman*.

'That', When Experienced, Is 'This'

Questioner: *If this entire Creation (This) is that* Sakti *(That), what need is there to mention That at all?*

Amma: We name the place where we are 'this'. When you are here, 'that' means 'what is there'. If you go there, 'that' becomes 'this'. If the thought 'this' exists, the thought 'that' exists; if there is no 'this', there is no 'that'.

The only reason for their saying 'That', is our saying 'This'. Because there is something we are naming 'This', the thought 'That' arises. If there is no 'This', there is no 'That'. When you say 'That', you mean 'what is not This'.

The word 'That' arises because we think that there is a state other than our existing state to be attained. We think. 'Let's leave this present state and its experiences and go to some other state and experiences.' And when we believe such a state exists, we name it 'That'. Where do we go, my child? How far do we go? Do we board a plane or a boat? In which direction do we go? Suppose we go there and obtain that experience: when 'That' is experienced, 'That' becomes 'This'. 'That' is not what is experienced, but is imagined; This' is what is experienced. 'That' exists in thought, but never in experience.

That is why they say, "Whatever is obtained is not That. Whatever is experienced is not That. *Neti, neti!* '(Not this, not this!)'. If That is not anything, what is It? Because It is all. They say, 'It is not any particular thing; It is not this alone.' That is why they keep repeating, *'Neti, neti!'*

Q: *What is the proper attitude for one who would feel that all This is That?*

Amma: You feel that something is improper only when you think you should proceed in a particular way. Having decided that you should proceed in a certain way, you feel that anything other than that is 'improper'. 'Proper' is acting the way we decide. Consider crows for example: as they fly they excrete. You feel that it is improper, but it's quite natural. It isn't improper; it is their nature, their way, the way of creation. But to you it seems improper, because you feel that they should not do it. Always, what is 'improper' depends upon the way we view things.

All You Cognize Is 'That'

Questioner: *Amma, you say, 'All is That'. What exactly do you mean?*

Amma: What you see as All, is nothing but That.

Q: *I see the wall as white, but on analysis it is found to be composed of seven colours which in turn reduce to wavelengths. When you say, 'That', what exactly do you mean?*

Amma: How do you cognize all these?

Q: *Through the senses and the mind.*

Amma: All you cognize is That.

Sakti

Questioner: *What does 'Reality' mean?*

Amma: *Sakti.*

Q: *What does* 'Sakti' *mean?*

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Amma: The *sakti* that exists in all things. (Amma took a pen and scribbled some lines on a piece of paper.) This pen has the *sakti* to hold the ink, the hand has the *sakti* to hold the pen, and the paper has the *sakti* to bear the letters. All these *saktis* are that Reality. That Reality is this *Sakti.*

Q: *If all these* saktis *in all these things are that Reality, what is special about It?*

Amma: I never said It had any speciality *(pratyeka).* When the *sakti* in everything is It, and Its also, there is no speciality.

Q: *What is that state like?*

Amma: That cannot be explained. Only because it became necessary to explain the unexplainable did the speciality arise.

* * *

Amma: *'Sakti'* means the *Adhara* (basis, support, sustaining power) for all and everything. *Sakti* knows no limits, no obstacles.

'Adhara' means ... consider a swing—the chain is the *adhara* for the seat, the beam for the chain, the Earth for the beam, space for the Earth ... . If you wish to continue, there are innumerable *adharas.* Each thing is the *adhara* for another. Where is the end to this? In this way the *Adhara* pervades everywhere. All things are based on the *Adhara,* therefore, It is common to all. All (creation) is the *Adhara* for All (Creation).

Q: *Isn't there anything special* (visesha) *about It?*

Amma: Nothing surpasses that *Sakti.*

Q: *Denying this visible Universe, they say that God is invisible.*

Amma: How can they say that God is invisible? What is God? To what state are you giving the name 'God'? We are calling what we do not understand, 'God'. Whether He exists or not, we do not know. All this (which appears before us) is real; God is a concept *(bhava).* I have never seen God as you conceive Him.

Look! How beautiful is the shadow which that pomegranate tree throws on the wall. Doesn't the shadow seem more attractive than the real thing? Our concept of a remote God is more attractive than God himself.

What we think, does not happen, so there seems to be something beyond our reach. I feel that there is some *Sakti* beyond the reach of human perception and understanding—call It what you like: 'God', 'Nature', 'Matter'. *'Sakti'* (Energy) or whatever—which has become All. I feel That alone exists everywhere. Why? I cannot say. The entire Universe is filled with that *Sakti,* so we cannot define It as such-and-such. When there is not a single pin-point's space unoccupied by that *Sakti,* where are limitations for It?

What is this *Sakti* which is not anything in particular, which even science cannot explain? When you ask: 'What is He?' I say, 'He has become All.' Because Creation is divided into parts *(vyashtitva)* you think that there must be something beyond all this. It is said that this Creation took shape through God; I say That itself is as all these. *Sakti* itself became all the innumerable forms that constitute this Creation.

When *Sakti* comes as form, it does not mean that It is diminished thereby; It remains unlimited. When we take a vesselful of water from the ocean, the water appears to assume the limited form of the vessel—but the water in the vessel has the same ingredients as the water in the ocean.

What is invisible they call 'God'; what is visible they call 'Nature'. In my view, all that is visible is God alone. What science calls 'Nature', spirituality calls 'God'. The same *Sakti* seems different to the scientist and the spiritual man. Science sees *Sakti* by means of matter, but is unable to name it 'God'.

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Why can't God be seen? Because He does not exist separately; because He exists as all these; because He is, everywhere. God does not appear as one, He appears as everything. Where is a God surpassing Creation? Creation is itself God. I do not feel that there is anything beyond this Creation. Except This there is no other. God is Reality *(Asalu)*, the Absolute *(Kevala)*, 'What is'. I can find no better explanation for the word 'God'. What is? What is! You too are within That. If you can understand the inner meaning of these words, you will have understood everything.

Q: *Some say there is a God; others say there is no God. Which is true?*

Amma: Your opinion?

Q: *God certainly exists.*

Amma: What have you seen that leads you to say so? It is faith alone that makes one fellow say He exists and another fellow say He does not exist.

Q: *What is the reason for saying God doesn't exist?*

Amma: What is the reason for saying God does exist?

Q: *The Vedas and Puranas say so. Rama, Krishna ...*

Amma: It is said that They have come and gone, and that They did many works while in bodily form. They too had our characteristics, it is said ...

Q: *Some say there is a God; others say there is no God. What do you say?*

Amma: (Laughs.) I agree with all.

* * *

(A Swami came with his disciples to meet Amma.)

Swami: *How does this Universe appear to you?*

Amma: Trees appear as trees, houses as houses—each one as it is, different from another.

S: *If so, where do they come from?*

Amma: From the Universe, surely.

S: *What? You know the tree must have a seed—who ordained that the seed come?*

Amma: 'What is' has come as seeds.

S: *If 'What is' has come as seeds, where did all things come from?*

Amma: It is not like something coming to one place from another. 'What is' is everywhere, and That has itself become all that we see.

S: *(Anger in his voice) So what is* Advaita *(Non-duality)? Do you know what* Visishtadvaiti *(Qualified Non-duality) is? Have you at least heard the words?*

Amma: (Picked up a banana.) I think this is *Advaita*. (Peeled off the skin and held both parts) This is *Dvaita* (duality).

S: *You said that the Universe is the* Adhara *(basis) for all that we see. What is the* Adhara *for the Universe?*

Amma: The Universe is its own *Adhara*.

S: *You say the Universe is its own* Adhara, *but on what do you base your statement?*

Amma: On Myself.

S: *You have perception, but no scholarship. Do study the scriptures thoroughly!*

Amma: Scriptures do not yield experience; experience yields scriptures.

S: *(Enraged.) The scriptures were not written just for you; they are for everybody, and they are the authority ! (He left abruptly.)*

* * *

Questioner: *Are there any universal laws of motion which apply uniformly right the way from subatomic particles to the entire Cosmos?*

Amma: There may be laws applying to small segments such as one stellar constellation or atoms, but there are no universal laws uniformly applicable from particles to the entire Cosmos.

Life Energy Is the Union of Body and Mind

The Body

Amma: Do you exist now, or not? You know that you exist, but you do not know the source *(mula)* of existence. The body is produced by our parents' intercourse, but even those who gave birth to us do not know how and when existence is acquired. Even science does not understand that unlimited *Sakti* (Energy) which appears in a limited form as the parents. What is that *Sakti*? That *Sakti* manifests as the body, as the idol, as sperm and as ovum, as blood, as *prana* (vital energy) ... .

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The body *(sarira)* is termed '*bhautika*' (material) because it is a combination of the five elements *(pancha-bhutas)*. The body does only what the five elements do. Only because they are present in your body can you perceive them outside. The elements are *Sakti* alone: the original One divided and became the five elements. In each of the five elemental natures all five are combined. In each element all the rest are present, nevertheless differences exist. For example, when we say that the *sattva guna* (quality of harmony) predominates in someone, we do not mean that he has none of the other *gunas* (qualities), but rather that the *sattva guna* has expanded and exceeded all the rest.

Sakti Itself exists as All. With different combinations of the five elements It takes on all these various forms—body, rock, earth, pot... . So, through *Sakti* this body took shape. *Sakti* exists as

blood, bones, muscles and all the various functions. Each part within the body performs its own function. This Is that *Sakti's* greatness: that each function has its own part to perform it. All this is Its transformation—this body, its changes and its actions.

Questioner: *What does 'conquering the five elements' mean?*

Amma: 'Conquering' simply means understanding. 'What is' is Mind. Conquest is realizing that. To say that the five elements are conquered does not mean that they cease to exist—indeed a living being is itself a combination of the five elements. Understanding is conquering. We begin by wanting to conquer Nature *(prakriti)*, only to realize at last that Nature is itself God.

The Mind

Amma: There is something to which we give the name 'mind' *(manas)*. That to which thoughts occur is what we call the 'mind'. We consider that which perceives, thinks, and causes us to speak and to act to be one thing (i.e., the mind), and that which speaks and acts to be another (i.e., the body). But I say that both are the same *Sakti*.

Only if there is a body can mind be known. What is mind? What is it like? In the course of enquiring into the mind, such thoughts arise as: 'The mind is not the eyes, not the ears ... Is there a mind, in addition to all these, existing separately in this body?' But asking where in the body the mind is located is like asking where in a damp cloth is its dampness located. Mind is not located exclusively in any particular place in the body; it is everywhere. Mind is *Sakti*. That *sakti* which exists within a body and thinks many thoughts and performs many functions is called 'mind'. Then what is the *Atman* (Self)? The *Atman* is not a particular form. That *Sakti* which is all-pervading is what is called 'Atman'. Nothing exists but That, so it is not as if there is a third entity besides the body and the mind.

Mind is that which understands. The mind is that *sakti* which sees through the eyes and cognizes. The eyes look; the mind alone cognizes. The eyes are two, but sight is one; the ears are two, but hearing is one. So too, all the various things are cognized by the one mind.

What is the form of the mind? When water is poured into a cup. It assumes the form of the cup; when poured into a tub, it assumes the form of the tub—and yet it is the same water. Just so, the mind assumes the form of whatever it cognizes. It is what cognizes all forms; it is what understands everything.

The Body and the Mind Are Inseparable

Amma: The mind does not exist independently of the body. When mind acquires a body it acquires differences of degree and passes through stages. When you were a foetus in the womb, did your mind possess the knowledge which it now has? After birth there is development, of thinking, acquisition of qualities, growth and decay. The body has needs and the mind has thoughts—they run in parallel. The body develops certain needs—hunger, thirst—all these, where are they from? A newborn baby seeks milk. If you watch very closely, you will observe that although he fails at first, he gradually learns. Who teaches him? *Svabhava* (inherent nature)? Then that *svabhava* is what I term 'God'. As the child grows, so many thoughts occur to his mind. Soon after birth we respond to the calls of nature quite unconsciously, but we do not remain so for ever—later on we wear clothes. The level of thinking of a child differs from that of an adult. Needs are of one kind in infancy, of another kind in youth, and of yet another kind in old age.

If you consider the body and the mind separately, which has needs? The needs are one for the combination of body *and* mind. The mind by itself has no needs; it is able to recognize needs. For example, when it is cold it is cold for the body. The body undergoes

it, and the mind recognizes the coldness. The body and the mind do not exist separately.

'What Is' Is Mind

Amma: That which sees through the eyes, hear through the ears, feels through the touch and understands everything is Mind alone. 'What is' its that One. That is functioning through all the sense and motor organs. It performs all functions by means of all the organs.

That which expresses itself and that which does not express itself, that which perceives 'What is' as something else, and that which perceives 'What is' as It is—all that is nothing but Mind. Mind is present even where there is no intelligence. Understanding is intelligence. It exists both as intelligence and as unintelligence. Mind exists in so many forms. Not only hearing and seeing—'What is' is Mind.

Questioner: *Does mind cease to exist when the body dies?*

Amma: We know only the mind which exists within the confines of a body; we do not know that Mind which exists without a body. We do not know what happens to the mind when the body dies. Jesus lived and died, and now we worship the story of his life and the words he spoke. Only when the mind inhabits a body can it express itself. Divorced from a body, mind becomes Energy.

Trees sway because of the wind; the wind is not due to the trees. Water waves too are caused by air movements. Air moves, and, through touch moves every form. It is the *svabhava* of wind to make things move. Like Mind, air has no unique form of its own. This entire Creation is pervaded by Mind, but we cannot cognize that unlimited Mind. It is not available to our senses. It is not interacting with things.

When we take a vesselful of water from the ocean, the water assumes the form of the vessel; when it is thrown back into the

ocean, it can no longer be distinguished. That water, like Mind, is visible when it assumes a limited form, but invisible when unlimited. At death the limited mind dissolves in the unlimited Mind. The limited mind is like a bubble in the ocean, which emerges, then breaks and merges again. No water is lost. Consider waves—when we see a wave, although that wave is part of the ocean, it does exist. All is Mind. Mind never ceases to exist.

Death Is Change, Not Annihilation

Questioner: *Amma, what is birth?*

Amma: In the case of plants we call it 'germination'; when a man descends to Earth we call it 'birth'. When something originates which did not exist before, when something which is not apparent becomes apparent, we say that it has taken birth.

Q: *What is death?*

Amma: We call it 'death' if what we regard as the signs of life are absent.

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Q: *When we speak of the difference between a dead body and a living being, what is meant by* 'prana' *(vital* Sakti, *life-energy)!*

Amma: The *sakti* (capability, power) to hear and the *sakti* to reply are absent from the dead body. *Prana* is the union between the mind and the body. Only if both are united is there *prana*. *Prana* too is *Sakti*, but *prana* differs from *Sakti* just as a living branch differs from a dry twig. The dry twig has no (visible) *prana-sakti*.

Where does the *prana* go when the body dies? It does not go to any particular place. It is there, just as the air which has escaped from a punctured tyre is there. The limited *prana- sakti* which exists in the body merges with the all-pervading *Sakti*. That *Sakti* is so great that it cannot be cognized. You cannot find out how the *prana* comes, or how and where it goes, even with a microscope.

Q: *Does 'going' mean 'becoming formless'?*

Amma: That, which assumes forms, does not exist separately; that same *Sakti* exists as everything.

Q: *May we say that if* Sakti *is absent it is death?*

Amma: That *Sakti* has played with the body—now we do not see it moving or hear it talking. All that was useful to us is no longer there. And yet that corpse is still useful to worms and insects. It has sufficient Life *(Chaitanya)* to serve as food for them. Even if it decomposes, you cannot say it has no Life. Its Life may not be the same as is seen in living beings, but it is Life nevertheless. Even dead bodies may move due to the accumulation of gases within. *Sakti* is necessary even for change to occur of its own accord. Everything that changes manifests *Sakti* thereby and so cannot be termed 'lifeless' *(jada)*. If anything has a *guna* (quality), that means it has *Sakti*. So we cannot say that a corpse has no Life at all. The most we can say is that the Life it has is of no use to us. When your body is alive we see one kind of Life; but even when the body is dead it has Life, invisible though it may be. What is visible is Life; what is invisible is Life. That means All is Life—There is nothing devoid of Life. Change is itself Life.

Q: *Does a person exist after his death?*

Amma: If you think so, then he must exist before his birth also. Therefore, we may say that he exists always ... . What is before birth is also what is after death. What is before birth is not known to us; what is after death is not known to us. In my view both states are the same.

Perhaps change is going on, but does anyone know that which has died? The scriptures say that a *Jiva* (individual soul) dwells within the limited body. They say that the body alone is destroyed, and that the *jiva* goes on existing for ever, wandering and wandering, taking on different bodies until finally it is liberated from the cycle of

rebirths. Even if you regard the *sakti* which pervades the body as the *jiva,* the fact remains that (at death) it abandons everything and goes. Where does it go? When they say, *'Jiva',* do they mean that it has an individual little form of its own? I say that there is no individual *jiva. 'Jiva'* means *'prana'. Prana* is the *sakti* which connects the body and the mind. Unable to understand *prana,* they named it *'jiva'.* It forms taking all the elements *(pancha-bhutas)* as its basis. It dissolves, but we cannot say where. That *Sakti,* which gave it form dissolves it in Itself—but the elements always exist. So death is change, not annihilation.

Q: *The* Gita *says, 'Just as this body passes through childhood, youth and old age, so too at death we pass into another body ... .' So death is only assuming another form, isn't it?*

Amma: It is the *svabhava* (inherent nature) of that *sakti* to assume forms. Always It is assuming forms. Why should only that *sakti* which existed within a particular body come?

Q: *It is not as though there are separate lives, but rather just assuming another form, as with childhood and so on.*

Amma: *Sakti* assumes another form. The *svabhava* which was apparent to us disappears.

Q: *They say that the* jiva *is the* bija-rupa *(seed-form).*

Amma: The so-called '*jiva*' is what connects the body, the mind and *Sakti*. After you plant a seed it separates into two halves and the shoot grows from between them. The same seed does not come again. The seed is the basis for germination.

Why should the same one be reborn? Waves in the ocean, having emerged from the ocean, merge again. Your lives are just like them. A wave arises and decays—another arises. How can you say the same wave has arisen? Through Its impulsion you are born, and, having been born, again through Its impulsion you merge in It.

Can you be certain that you will be reborn? How long after dying will it take? Say a cupful of water is taken from the ocean and then put back —if another cupful is taken, what is the chance of the same water being gathered up?

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Sakti Impels Thought and Action

The State of *Shakti* Called Mind

Questioner: *Shouldn't we control the mind* (manas)?

Amma: What will you control? With what will you control it? With mind alone. What is that state which we call 'mind'? Whatever is being thought about, whatever suggests itself to the mind, the mind assumes that form. It assumes the form of love; it assumes the form of hate. These *bhavas* (mental attitudes) are different, but they are all *bhavas* of the mind alone. So it is only the mind that can control the mind. The mind is cognized by the mind itself.

Through what shall we control what? You say, 'We should control the mind.' All right, is there anything other than mind? In fact what is mind? That which understands all this, that *sakti* (power) which speaks, hears, understands and perceives everything, is called 'mind'. If we think of mind as being separate from all else, what is its form? If it had any particular form we could say, 'This is mind; that is not mind.' We have given the name 'mind' to that which does all this (i.e., sees, hears, understands, etc.). What is the *svabhava* (inherent nature) of mind? *Sakti* has become many; It perceives many. It is change; It is what changes; It is the changeless also. Its *svabhava* is to cognize many reasons *(karanas)*. Cognizing many reasons, accepting some, rejecting others, hearing many sounds, thinking many thoughts—that state of *Sakti* is what we call 'mind'. In fact we do not know what the mind is. We do not know what it is like.

Sakti Becomes Thoughts

Questioner: *Different kinds of thoughts* (alochanas) *come to us. Which of them should we put into practice?*

Amma: We arise from our sleep, and numerous thoughts come and go before we fall asleep again. We don't remember them all—many thoughts come which are not remembered; but some leave a deeper impression and are remembered. Can you tell me how many thoughts have come to you today since you awoke? They don't stay; yet some are stable and do stay. For instance, today you thought of going to the village—that one stays. Suppose you then think that you shouldn't go—that one also stays.

As you walk on your way, so many thoughts come and go. You aren't even aware that they are yours. Only if you remember the thoughts you get, can you call them your thoughts. If you don't even remember the thoughts which you yourself get, where is the question of putting them into practice? For example, yesterday you ate something which you enjoyed. Today you don't even remember yesterday's taste; you can only say that it was good. The taste we experience when the food is on the tongue has already gone by the time the food has entered the gullet.

There are two kinds of thoughts: those which remain, and those which don't. When the rains come, so many insects come into existence and die. The stable ones remain for some time, but there is age and duration for them too. Thoughts are like those insects. First tell me how many thoughts have come since you woke up this morning; later you can think of practising them. You don't even remember!

Q: *Is it possible to control the mind through meditation* (dhyana)?

Amma: *Do it and see.* Mind alone must control mind—none else. The question of its possibility or otherwise, doesn't arise: the mind that wishes to control mind must control it; there is nothing else.

Thoughts come and go at one and the same place. We don't know where they go. The *Sakti* that ends thoughts is the same *Sakti* that gives rise to them and is able to perceive them. All these are one and the same *Sakti*.

Whether you call it '*manas*', '*buddhi*' or '*chitta*'*, they are all one. The differences are only apparent. They are giving the same thing different names. Thoughts received at one level are being called '*chitta*'; thoughts at a different level, '*buddhi*'; and thoughts at yet another level, '*manas*'. I am giving the one name, '*manas*', to all these.

That from which thoughts emerge, and which recognizes them, is That into which they merge. When you notice that a thought has ended, you think that you have ended it; but you cannot understand it when a thought ends without your knowledge. When you want some particular thing to happen, and it happens, you think that it has happened because of your wish. When a thought occurs suddenly and spontaneously, you think, 'I have just had a thought'; but whereas some occur consciously, others occur without our being conscious of them. New thoughts force out the old thoughts. When some thoughts occur we feel that we are thinking them; but when some others occur we feel that there is nothing we can do about them. And yet all these thoughts arise from the same source.

* * *

Amma: We call that which gets thoughts the 'mind'; another may call it the 'brain'. The atheist says that thoughts are the *svabhava* of the brain; I think that *svabhava* is itself God.

Questioner: *Can you prove to me that the mind is not self-acting, but that some universal* Sakti *is working through it? I have put this question, in vain, to almost all the known Babas, Bhagavans and Yogis.*

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* *Terms for various mental functions.*

Amma: If this question were yours alone, then your mind should be able to find the answer by itself. You have tried hard to find the answer. You can either continue your search for an answer, or you can drop the question like a hot coal because it only adds to your worries. If you can neither find an answer nor drop the question, can your mind alone be its author?

Q: *They say, 'Man thinks one thing, and God thinks another.'*

Amma: Only if God thinks, do we think. We are not separate from That which thinks.

Q: *Has mind no independence at all?*

Amma: It has independence also. When duality is perceived, the mind seems to be dependent, but how can it be dependent when it is All?

To Think Is the Mind's Nature

Amma: They say that the mind must be rid of volitions *(sankalpas)* because volitions are transient (and therefore, in their view, illusory). But there is no 'volitionless state'; only that word exists. There is no state devoid of thoughts *(alochanas)*. To think is the mind's *svabhava* (inherent nature). Thoughts are always occurring. You may try to stop thinking, but when that state arises, everything is felt to be natural *(sahaja)*.

'Mind' means 'change'. If it were without change, it could not be called 'mind'; just as the sea would not be the sea if it were not in motion. All we see is changing; the unchanging is never seen. *Bhavas* (thoughts, mental states) are always changing. This volition having gone, another comes. We do not know why one follows another. We do not know where volitions come from, or how they come. Only after they have come are they cognized. Suppose you are sitting and the volition comes to get up and leave. Why it came is not known. Only after it has come do you stir. The volition comes,

and only then is there effort, action and experience. How can you know what has not yet come? Are the words that come to a poet the very words he needs to write?

How do thoughts come? It seems that some *Sakti,* God, Impulsion *(prerana)* or something must produce them. Volitions occur to the mind: some happen (i.e., are fruitful), some do not. Both kinds come. The mind's *svabhava* is to think dualistically in terms of 'what happens' and 'what doesn't happen'. Not all volitions are fruitful, so it seems that there must be some *Sakti* beyond the mind. However, I do not feel this duality. I feel that the sole cause for all these kinds of thoughts and experiences is the one *Sakti* becoming many. How many kinds of thoughts and experiences have come and gone—that is its *svabhava.* Mind, volition and *Sakti* are not different. The volition whereby That becomes all volitions—that volition is volitionless volition.

Questioner: *Why should I be given a thought which I am unable to put into practice?*

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Amma: Perhaps to make you feel that you are directed by some *Sakti* which you neither know nor understand; to make you realize that it is not you, but a far greater *Sakti* that does everything.

Q: *My mind is continually thinking—not about one thing, but about many.*

Amma: Not only you; everyone is continually thinking. What is the mind like? It is like a monkey, its *svabhava* is to be unsteady. It is always running in different directions ... . The drift of thoughts is beyond your control. You are not aware of the drifting at the moment of drifting from the thought on which you have tried to fix the mind. The appearance of a thought is its birth, and its merger into another is its death. Every moment it is happening—one thought dying and another taking birth.

Q: *Do let good thoughts come. Amma!*

Amma: *In fact thought itself is good.* Without it, all this would not exist. 'Good' and 'bad' are according to our likes and dislikes. Even thought is like an action, for only when it occurs to the mind can we do anything outwardly.

Whatever Is Experienced Is Real

Questioner: *Is our experience real?*

Amma: Whatever you experience is real, my child. When you are suffering from a stomach ache, can you believe that it is unreal? When *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality) becomes a reality for you, this Universe does not seem any different from That.

Suppose I go to sleep happily, but while sleeping I dream that I am vomiting blood. When I wake up, nothing is to be seen. I who experienced it become confused, whereas anyone watching is amazed. They tell us to regard this Universe as a dream which will disappear when *jnana* (enlightenment) is gained. But we are not dreaming anything that does not exist in this Universe. If this Universe becomes real, do dreams also become real?

Q: *They say that we experience our* prarabdha karma *(the consequences of our actions in previous lives).*

Amma: If That alone has become 'what is', where does our *prarabdha* come from? From That, otherwise it has no existence. 'What is' is That.

Where is the *prarabdha* that has not yet come to the mind? Is it being kept in reserve? If so, where did thoughts come from in the very first life? We do not know why we have come. We do not know the cause of our present experiences. We are acting according to what occurs to our minds; there is no evidence to say that the *karma* concealed in previous lives suddenly blossoms forth. Where is it hidden in the mind?

There is a saying that the sweetness of *payasam* (a sweet milk drink) does not stick to the spoon. I say that volition *(sankalpa)* is the cause for action, and, since volition is not in your hands, how can any consequence stick to you? That gives every experience. That *Sakti* alone is that cause. Unlimited *Sakti* we call '*Atman*' limited *sakti* we call 'mind'. That which is experienced, that which makes it appear, and you who experience—all are that same *Sakti*.

Prarabdha is not something we earn; it is the experience He gives us. I say *prarabdha* itself is God.

* * *

Amma: I long very much for dreams. Longing *(asa)* is always for what we lack .... Dreams do not occur. There is nothing unreal.

* * *

Amma: When I remember things, it is not as if they happened at some other time; It is as if they are happening now. There is nothing special in what I am saying.

Mata Amritanandamayi Math Sri Digital Centre Kollam Kerala India

Mind Is Present in Sleep

Questioner: *Is the mind present in sleep?*

Amma: Yes. In sleep what is the mind like? In sleep I do not know in what state I am then. What is that state? Can you say what the state of mind is?

In deep sleep *(sushupti)* the mind is insensible; in light sleep *(nidra)* the mind is dreaming *(svapna)*. Thoughts coming during sleep constitute dreaming. Hitherto unheard and unseen thoughts appear in light sleep. When a thought comes to the mind, the mind creates that particular form for itself. Dreams *(kalalu)* do not come from elsewhere; they appear because the mind creates those forms for itself. You are imagining and seeing what is not present. So dream experience is your experience alone. A dream is what appears to

you alone. Rain, for instance, we all experience collectively, but only the one person experiences a dream.

Deep sleep is dreamless sleep. Mind is present in deep sleep also. If someone touches you or calls your name while you are experiencing so-called 'deep sleep', you wake up. Now, what hears is what wakes you up. So even in deep sleep there is a sense which is awake and alert. What was (apparently) inactive until then is perhaps active also. That which can bring you from sleep to wakefulness is inactive and active also.

Has the so-called 'madman' a mind or not? Though he does not know what rain is, and acts like a child, even the madman has a mind. What kind of mind has he? How do we describe his mind? For that matter, consider ourselves—can we know everything, even when in the waking state? Even thoughts that occur to the mind in the waking state cannot be remembered. There is nothing greater than mind: the mind alone is what understands, or does not understand.

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One 'I' Has Become All

Questioner: *Why does man consider himself a separate individual?*

Amma : The fragmented *(khanda)* is form; the unfragmented *(akhanda)* is a *bhava* (concept, mental state). That I which is as I alone, is *Aham Brahmasmi* (the *I-am-Brahman* state). When that all-pervading I needs to see as you, that I becomes you and sees. That I *(aham)* takes form *(akara)* and becomes the ego *(ahamkara)*. That I which is as the I distinct from you is a dualistic state. That I which is as I alone, became you, he, she, and it, and therefore the experiencer thinks himself separate. We give the name 'I' to that which has these thoughts. I and the mind are not different. 'You' and 'I' exist because of our thinking.

A sign *(gurtu)* has a particular form so that it can be identified and conveniently communicated. 'I' is a sign. The I which is spread everywhere they called the 'Universal Self' *(Paramatman)*; the *sakti* confined within a body they called the 'individual self' *(pratyagatman)*. That I which has become all 'I's, that I which has become everything—me, door, tree, ant-hill, crow—has the name 'I' for convenience of communication. When it is felt, 'I am everything; All is I', then I, the individual self, and the Universal Self do not appear different.

Q: *Not knowing 'All Is One', is like dreaming. The dreamer thinks that the thief he sees is real, and so he suffers. We feel there's an 'I' within, but if we investigate it logically and rationally, we don't find anything, however far we go, and everything seems like a mirage.*

Amma: The analogies are all right, but even what you call a 'mirage' is not non-existent. For all these the I must exist. You are thinking, 'I am'. Your mind is investigating. There is something you cannot understand. There must be something which gives these thoughts. That which thinks through thought—what is it? What is the real nature of thought? What is its source? Why isn't what we thought happening?

What is in all is what says, 'I'. That I is *Brahman* (Reality). I do not mean that I alone am *Brahman.* Doesn't everyone say, 'I'? That I is the ego. Even the I which sees, recognizes and asks, 'Who am I?' is that same I. Without the ego we cannot become *Aham Brahmasmi* (I-am-*Brahman*). It is only through the ego that one gets rid of the ego. Understand what I mean by 'knowing the I through the ego'. The feeling of not knowing God even though you are yourself God, is knowing the I through the ego. Even that state is not devoid of *Brahmatva* (*Brahma*-ness, reality).

* * *

Amma: If everybody's mind were the same, as soon as a thought occurred to me, the same thought would occur to you. But everyone has his own experience *(anubhava):* one's experience is not another's. The experience given to one Is not given to another—even if put in front of him, he will see nothing. Everyone perceives according to his capacity to perceive. Without the capacity to cognize, he cannot see even though he has eyes—even though he has a lamp, he cannot see.

Mind has individuality *(vyashtitva).* How are four rooms obtained in the same house? In the same body, if some good thoughts occur, he is called a 'sage'; if some terrible thoughts occur, he is called a 'savage'. The very same mind thinks of killing one fellow and protecting another. If the mind is as One, we give the name 'enlightened man' *(jnani);* if it is as two, we give the name 'ignorant man' *(ajnani).* The mind that has a worshipful *bhava* is 'divine'; if the same mind thinks about the wrong things, we call it 'devilish'. Mind devoid of compassion is the Devil. Mind is itself God; mind is itself the Devil.

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So, although all minds are made of the same substance, there are differences of degree—'madman', 'common man', 'enlightened man'.... If the mind thinks confusedly, he is a 'madman'; if the same mind becomes steadfast, he is an 'enlightened man'. These names do not denote the mind as such, but rather the manner of its thinking and its functioning.

Every human being judges others according to his own mind. Whether it be one's wife, husband, children, brothers, sisters, parents, or even those who consider themselves spiritual guides and *gurus* and who teach others, nobody understands another's mind. This is what is meant by 'variety'. If the mind were understood, there would be no teaching.

Everyone says, 'My mind.' But of whom is he saying, 'My mind'? I and the mind are not different, are they?

In the Bhagavad Gita even man's mind is said to be God. The mind is of prime importance for everything. It is the mind that cognizes the other: according to our minds we cognize the world. It is the mind that thinks, 'This is "good", and that is "bad".' With the scale we keep in our minds we measure everything—and we are satisfied.

The mind calls something *'guru'* and worships it, rejecting something else. Since the mind is unable to understand that mind is everything, it selects a particular form and calls it 'God'. Then it seeks that God within itself. That means that the mind itself does everything. Finally it understands none other than itself. Knowing oneself is, after all, knowing God. One who knows himself knows everything. It is the I that knows God; it is the I that knows everything. This intelligence that knows everything is itself God, isn't it?

You Do As Your Mind Tells You

Questioner: *Amma, what is the* sakti *(power) in you that attracts people to you?*

Amma: The *asakti* (fondness, attachment)* in me.

Q: *Don't you make any effort?*

Amma: For one who has been seated, where is the thought of getting up and going? As it occurs to my mind, so I proceed. Does anyone do otherwise than his mind tells him?

Q: *If the mind impels one to do wrong, isn't it wrong?*

Amma: I keep no list of rights and wrongs, my child.

Q: *You speak very strangely, Amma.*

Amma: It is my way of putting things.

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* *There is another similar-sounding word meaning 'powerlessness'.*

Q: *You have said: 'What is thought, does not happen; "what has to be" is unavoidable.' Then what is the use of attempting anything purposefully?*

Amma: It is true, my child, that 'what has to be' is unavoidable. But even though you know that truth you cannot avoid making an effort. Yet however much an effort you make, finally it is only 'what has to be' that happens. Some time ago you planned to leave here by the eight o'clock bus. You bathed and dressed quickly, and came to take leave of me. But what has happened? You saw me, sat down, and you are still here talking with me now. You are sitting before me, whereas you had planned to return home. But there was no avoiding making all that effort.

Q: *Can't we avoid making any effort and simply keep quiet, Amma?*

Amma: Even your making that effort is part of 'what has to be' for you, my child.

Q: *What is* sadhana *(spiritual practice)? They say that strenuous* sadhana *is necessary to accomplish anything spiritual.*

Amma: Only what becomes possible *(sadhya)* is *sadhana,* my child. However much *sadhana* you think you are doing, it cannot go beyond your mind. Your mind controls you. You do as it tells you; you cannot go against it.

Q: *They say that if the mind is controlled, anything can be done.*

Amma: If anyone amongst you can say that he is going against his mind, step forward—let us see! (Nobody stirred.) So, however much *sadhana* we do, however many books we read, finally we do only what our minds tell us; we cannot do otherwise.

Q: *Amma, everyone is teaching* Vedanta *(philosophy) in his own way. If Truth is one, why do they speak in so many different ways?*

Amma: Each one speaks according to his experience, my child.

Q: *If that is so, on what basis can ordinary people like us proceed?*

Amma: Although people say many things, finally it is your experience alone that is your basis, my child. You may read everything, and listen to what everyone says, but finally you will ask your mind what your experience has to tell you. You can do nothing beyond what your mind tells you.

Q: *At one place in the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna says that the scriptures are the only valid authority* (pramana) *as to what must be done and what must not be done. On the other hand, you say that each person's experience is his only authority. Which of those sayings should we adopt to attain life's goal?*

Amma: Haven't I told you already, my child? You are asking the same question over and over again in different ways. Please understand what I am saying. Do you take the scriptures as your authority, as Sri Krishna told you? No. You learn only those parts of the scriptures that you require. Having listened to everything, finally your mind summarizes your experience, and on the basis of what your mind says, you proceed. You cannot go even a single step beyond that.

Q: *But what about your case, Amma?*

Amma: What is there to say? To me the scriptures have no authority. I have not read them, my child. I take as my authority what my life experience has taught me, and I am telling you that. (Smiles.) I am very stubborn, my child. I am not influenced by what anyone says. I am conveying to you only what my experience has taught me.

Q: *Why do you descend to our level and tell us what experience has taught you, Amma? As Jagatmata (Universal Mother), whatever you say comes from that state alone. Why do you*

give the impression by your words that you are in a state like ours?

Amma: (Smiles.) My child, I am not descending from any state. Whatever state exists for me now, that alone is my state. There is no descending or ascending.

Free-Will Does Not Operate

Questioner: *You have said, 'The same* Sakti *that creates us, also determines our actions.' Do you mean that there is no free-will?*

Amma: It does seem as though there is. It seems to really be there; but it doesn't operate. It is only because it doesn't operate that I speak thus.

There are desires—some are being fulfilled, and some are not. This is so even for animals. If a cow wants to break away from the post to which it is tethered, it isn't possible; only sometimes does it become possible. It is the same for humans too.

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Q: *Does only what is determined happen?*

Amma: We don't know whether or not there is something else directing events, but our plans are not materializing.

Q: *But isn't free-will operating when we choose one course of action rather than another?*

Amma: Aren't there times when you regret your first choice? So-called 'free-will' appears to succeed sometimes. When what you desire happens, you think that the events happened because of your will. When what you desire doesn't happen, you think that the events happened despite your will. But it is always so. Life does not conform to the mind's desires. These two are always in conflict.

Sometimes when what you desire happens, you probably think it happened because of your desire. I feel from experience that at

no time is that true. At times you may like what happens and get a feeling that it happened because of your will. At other times you may dislike what happens and get a feeling that it happened despite your will.

Q: *Have we no responsibility for our good and bad deeds?*

Amma: You have no responsibility.

Q: *Then may we not kill someone and claim that we are not responsible?*

Amma: You are unable to do that. If you could do that, you could do good deeds also. Whoever is doing bad deeds is doing them in full awareness of the social conventions. In spite of being aware that good deeds should be done, you are not able to do them, are you?

Whose Effort Impels Human Effort?

Questioner: *As God has graced me with some* sakti *(ability, energy), I want to devote it to a noble cause.*

Amma: He who has given you that *sakti* will see to that also.

Q: *Even if All is God, there must be human effort* (prayatna) *too, mustn't there?*

Amma: Although man seems to have everything in his hands, in fact he has nothing. If we did not think, 'There is something we can do', we would neither have desire nor satisfaction. If we did not think, 'We are doing', we would neither have happiness, nor unhappiness. We feel that we do. He—call Him, 'God', '*Sakti*', or man's '*svabhava*' (inherent nature)—whatever name you use, makes us feel so, if we did not feel so, we could not do anything, we could neither make any effort nor feel happy with our effort. How can we be free from the 'me and mine' *bhava* (attitude)? It is *svabhava*.

Q: *If we accept that all is God's grace, how are sin and virtue to be distinguished?*

Amma: I think that both are God. I do not consider them to be separate and different from one another, nor do I consider that they belong to man.

Q: *What are heaven and hell, if there are no sin and virtue?*

Amma: Even if they do exist, we do not stop doing bad from fear of hell, nor do we do good from hope of heaven. We only talk about them. It is not because we are ignorant of them that we behave as we do. We know all about them—heaven and hell, good and bad, and the *dharmas* (principles of right conduct) we should practise—yet, although we want to do good, we are unable to do it; although we do not want to do bad, we are unable to refrain from doing it.

Q: *Shouldn't man use his mind for good purposes?*

Amma: I think that it is God that has created man and his *svabhava*. The mentality, which understands 'He is all' is itself Divinity *(daivatva)*; to think 'there is something which is mine' is humanity *(manavatva)*. Both these states must be given by that *Sakti*. There is no problem if we believe that everything depends on that *Sakti* alone; there is no problem if we believe that everything depends on man's *sakti*. But consider yourself, for example—although you had decided to come here, you could not do so for four days.

Q: *Such a level of perfection is possible for ones like Amma, but how is it possible for people like us?*

Amma: The decision *(nirnaya)* applies equally to all, whatever the level. Suppose we go to a cinema. Seating is provided equally for all. According to our ability to pay, we go to the seats costing two rupees or to the seats costing one rupee. He who pays one rupee does not have to provide his own seat, does he? The manager of the cinema has arranged for all. According to our means we occupy various classes of seats. If the manager did not know of the different abilities of men to pay, he would not have made such an arrangement.

We may say that the cause for his knowledge, and the entire arrangement is *svabhava, Sakti*, God, or whatever you wish to call It. There is nothing wrong if it is thought that it is entirely man's *sakti*—I am not denying it. There is nothing wrong if it is thought that it is entirely God's *sakti*. But it does not seem correct to say that some is His and some man's.

Q: *How can you say that?*

Amma: I cannot say why, but I feel it to be true.

Q: *But isn't man's effort necessary for him to go from one class to another, from one level to another?*

Amma: Even self-effort is the effort of the other-than-self. For example, you thought of visiting this village, but what you wanted to do in one day took four days to accomplish. It was not through any lack of effort, was it? Suppose you are studying for an examination—sometimes, not through any lack of effort, you fail; sometimes, without knowing why, you pass unexpectedly. You are continually experiencing such things in your daily life. All this is talking for the joy of it. What others tell us when we visit other places does not get as firmly established in our minds as the lessons of our daily lives. These things do happen to us—failing when we study hard, failing to come here when we want to come, and sometimes coming unexpectedly.

Q: *Please tell us what is necessary for us to attain a higher state.*

Amma: There is nothing in particular that I give. That which has given you this life, gives everything. There is nothing like self-effort. I do not think that even *sadhana* (spiritual endeavour) is in your hands. I think that even *sadhana* must become possible *(sadhya)*. You cannot practise a *sadhana*, which does not become possible. We have heard so many lectures and read so many texts—are they telling us not to do *sadhana*? Our not doing *sadhana* is certainly

not due to any lack of advice to do so! Then why doesn't it become possible to do *sadhana*? Even those who know all these *dharmas* and the methods to be followed cannot practise them! If it were possible for you to even sit with folded arms, it would be as if everything was in your hands. But even that is not possible. Because we do not cognize That which causes everything to be done, we think that we are doing, but we are doing only what has become possible. Until this is understood, we shall continue to think, 'I am doing'. My experience is that we cannot do anything, my child. But whether we attribute everything entirely to *Sakti*, or entirely to *svabhava*, the result is the same.

Q: *Amma, what must be done to stabilize the mind?*

Amma: Anyway, an effort has begun, hasn't it? The desire has arisen in the mind to stabilize the mind and, through that, to achieve something. It was not there at first; it began at some later stage. That which caused it to begin, Itself gives 'what has to be' for you, some time or other. I call it the *taruna* (appropriate moment). That same *Sakti* which is assisting you in worldly matters, also assists you in spiritual matters.

Q: *You seem to attach no importance at all to human effort, but to consider God's volition all-important.*

Amma: I give importance to human effort, but not as you do. You leave out something. I ask you to take the entire responsibility, if you can. Try! As you desire to stabilize your mind, from today put aside all other things. If you think it is at all important, try! We shall see.

Q: *At least insofar as it is possible for us ...*

Amma: That is exactly what I am asking you about! I am laying total importance on human effort. Every morning after waking up, have a wash at precisely four o'clock or whichever time you decide on, without deviating from it by even a minute; this side or that do

this first, then we shall see ... . If it becomes possible for you to at least wash punctually, we shall see. For you to be so punctual, sleep must come under your control. Sleep, waking up, this coming and going (to and from Jillellamudi), and all the other hindrances such as the calls of nature—all these will have to be controlled. You see, even to do so simple a thing, so many things must be controlled.

Only one thing remains to be said. However many confusions befall us, along whatever diverse paths a conversation proceeds, it finally arrives and stops at the same point, the same fact: everything is driven by a single *Sakti*—we proceed the way we are driven.

Nothing Is in Our Hands

Questioner: *Action* (karma) *is determined by* Sakti, *isn't it, Amma?*

Amma: *'Sakti'* means 'mind'. If you ask them how action arises, they all say that the mind produces it. One fellow believes that God directs his mind; another believes that his mind is self-directing. But whatever you believe, you are made to act, and you can act only in accordance with the mind's directions. I say that but for mind there can be no action. Mind is itself God.

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Amma: I do not feel that you are the doer *(karta)* of any action. Whatever happens, I feel there is but the one Cause *(karana)*. That is why it does not appear to me that one thing is greater than another. Although we may say that we have made something or prepared some other thing, I bear in mind that the Earth is their source *(mula)*. When That alone does everything, what is special about our doing? Although we think that it is our genius which transforms substances and things, that the metal comes from within the Earth and becomes a steel cabinet solely because we do it, I feel that the Cause for anything to come from within the Earth is also the Cause for anything to come from within the head. Even though they have discovered

the kerosene lamp, even though they have discovered the aeroplane, both are the same to me: I do not feel that they are two. The mind has that much *sakti,* but what are all these compared to the *Sakti,* which drives this entire Creation?

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Amma: Even on those occasions when we believe that we are the doers, we observe that we are not going the way we had thought to. We are unable to practise even our own precepts. That is why I say that we are not the doers, but that some *Sakti* gets things done. That does all the mischief all the time making you think that you are the cause.

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Questioner: *You say that all actions are God's and that man is merely His instrument. If all were to think along these lines, wouldn't the world become full of idlers?*

Amma: Even the thought to sit idle must be given by Him.

Q: *But how can God help unless there is some percentage of human effort?*

Amma: Even that effort must be given by Him.

Q: *May we not just as well sit idle and wait for God to take care of us?*

Amma: If you could sit completely idle, that would itself prove your independence. But in fact He is not allowing you to sit idle. It is only a rare one like Bala Yogi of Mummidivaram who is able to sit like that. No one can do so unless He impels it. All impulsions *(prerana)* is His. If you *can* sit like that, He will take care of you all right.

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Amma: It is all right if you believe that you do everything yourself. It is all right if you believe that He does everything Himself. But the belief that you do half and He does the other half is only a source of confusion.

One who feels responsible for all that happens is right in his own way, but there can be no compromise between the belief in self-effort and the belief in Destiny. (Amma holds up a piece of thread.) The one who believes in self-effort prefers to look at one end; the one who believes in Destiny prefers to look at the other end. (Amma ties the two ends together.) Now where are the two ends?

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Questioner: *Amma, is there a Divine* Sakti *superior to human effort?*

Amma: It is not correct to say, 'Divine *Sakti'*. *Sakti* is Itself Divine. From That arises human effort. To me they do not seem different. When someone said that both our volition *(sankalpa)* and His grace *(daya)* are required, I said that volition and grace are one and the same. All forms of *sakti* are manifestations of that one *Sakti*—plant, hill, fire, air and water .... If you say that *Sakti* is making you act, there must be two, you and *Sakti;* but if you say that *Sakti* acts *as* you, you speak of the One alone.

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Sakti Has Become Right and Wrong

Dharma, Love and Necessity

Questioner: *Amma would you please explain your saying: I might even kill my own children and bury them for the sake of* dharma*.

Amma: When it is said that *dharma* is great it doesn't mean that love *(prema)* is not great. Love and *dharma* are inseparable. There is love for the child, and it takes different forms, but on the whole it is love only. When you want to kill someone, a knife is needed; so you come to love the knife because it is necessary. *Dharma,* love, and necessity *(avasara)*—all three are intertwined. Why should one kill love? Killing is for some particular necessity, isn't it?

In one respect, at one stage, I loved a certain way of life: I loved certain limitations and I wanted to act within those limitations. In the process I loved whatever came my way. Loving those limitations, I acted within them; whatever were the ups and downs that came my way. Perhaps it is *dharma,* perhaps it is love. Suppose I intend bathing in the sea every day. On the way there, all kinds of obstacles may come in my way. If I get in the sea, there are numerous kinds of animals that may harm me: there may be some that would want to eat me, or some that I may want to eat. Deciding on that limitation

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* From the Sanskrit root *'dhri':* to support and sustain.

Dharma: the inherent law of being of a thing or person; virtue, the inner principle of society and religion; prescribed or customary conduct, morality, duty.
The Indian epics uphold *dharma* as the supreme value in life.

(to bathe in the sea every day) implies loving the sea, loving to bathe, loving to act in that way.

When love becomes primary, it isn't possible for there to be a single person who isn't loved: such love is the same towards all. It loves death, it loves life, it loves the evening, and it loves everything. Love itself is what is important.

Suppose we take *dharma* to be great. Here *'dharma'* means whatever we consider our *dharma* to be. We decide to proceed in a certain way, and we consider that way to be our *dharma.* Our *dharma,* therefore, is the set of limitations we impose on ourselves, the way we decide to proceed.

Dharma cannot be defined as only one particular way (for all individuals and circumstances). For instance, it is the nature of chillies to taste hot; that is their *dharma,* their *guna* (quality). *Dharma* and *guna* are the same.

If ten people sit together and decide that unprincipled living is *dharma,* then that becomes their *dharma.* All these *dharmas* and categories exist because we decide on them. It is like drawing boundaries and deciding to stay within those limits.

However, to act according to *dharma* is not in your hands. You define *'dharma'* (righteousness) to lie within your chosen limits, and anything outside those limits you define as *'adharma'* (unrighteousness). But on the whole these two are not in your hands.

Let us consider, for example, the conduct of Rama as described in the Ramayana*. The question is sometimes asked as to whether

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* Rama's wife, Sita, was abducted by Ravana, the king of the demons. When Rama finally rescued her, although he did not doubt her faithfulness, he knew that his subjects would, so he asked her to undergo the ordeal of entering a fire. She emerged unscathed, and Rama was satisfied that thenceforth nobody could reasonably doubt her purity.

it was in fact proper for Rama to ask Sita to enter the fire. He said that he wanted her to enter the fire just to set an example for others. It was not as though he did not know what was proper—it was to avoid the accusation that he was demanding from others a standard of behaviour which he did not demand from his own wife. This was the ideal for one who was the head of a household and a honourable man. It could be said that even punishing his wife was not in his hands, because, being the lord of a kingdom, his *dharma* was to guide the conduct of his subjects.

I say that even those in government, politics or administration conduct themselves as they think they should. A lord should conduct himself in one way, an emperor in another way, ministers in yet another way; a priest should be like this, the head of a family like that; a father should observe these *dharmas*, a mother should do those acts—all these are social norms of conduct. *Dharma* has not descended upon us from somewhere.

On the whole the fact that nothing is in our hands is what is important. Spiritually it is useful to feel that there is nothing we can do. Why is it said that great men, prophets and *avataras* (Divine incarnations), such as we take Rama to be, could not do all they wished? Rama intentionally acted as he did in order to set us an example.

Q: *Did he expect us to follow him?*

Amma: If there are any who can really do so. In fact our inability to follow *dharma* is not due to our ignorance of the Ramayana; it is because there is nothing we can do about it. This applies to all. It isn't as though Rama did not know that mere mortals cannot follow; nevertheless, as a king he had to act in a certain way.

Consider a father for instance: If you ask him to give up smoking he will be unable to; yet such a father, while himself smoking, scolds his son for doing the same thing. His wish is that his son's health

should not be spoiled. If you ask me whether his action is improper, I say it is not. Everybody experiences failure.

Q: *Then what is the use of setting on example?*

Amma: What is the use of Creation? It is its nature *(svabhava).*

Q: *Are moral restrictions social or religious?*

Amma: There was a man, a *Brahmin* named 'Y'. He followed the *dharma* (laid down in the scriptures) for a *Brahmin,* which requires that he beg all morning and then perform *yajnas* (ceremonial sacrifices). He should only beg; it isn't laid down that he may take up professions other than begging, such as agriculture, service, and so on. He must eat only what is given. 'Y' observed all this: he begged and performed *yajnas* in the prescribed way. But the time came when he had to marry off his daughter, and his *dharma* required that he find for her a husband who observed that same *dharma.* What was he to do? Under the existing social set-up we don't find such people at all. So as the set-up changes, the restrictions must also change.

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Hasn't it been said before that the Creation is not different from love *(prema)*? Creation is not different from *Sakti*: Creation itself is *Sakti; Sakti* itself is Creation. Creation is pervaded by love. Righteousness *(dharma)* and unrighteousness, morality *(neeti)* and immorality, right *(nyaya)* and wrong, sin *(papa)* and virtue *(punya)*— love contains all these. These are nothing different from love. Love is itself all. Love includes both humanity *(manavatva)* and Divinity *(daivatva).* Love also includes the mother raising children. Both *dharma* and moral instruction *(hitopadesa)* are involved in raising children. *'Dharma'* means deciding for ourselves to act in a certain way. Whatever we consider 'good' is our *dharma.*

I am not concerned with the question of whether 'right' applies to the doer of an action or to the one to whom it is done. In fact I have not found a meaning for 'right'. Whatever happens is right, I

think. But if whatever happens is right, is it right if one man kills another? Is it right if a young man of thirty dies while an old man of sixty continues to live? It seems to me that man is unable to discriminate between 'right' and 'wrong'. Even *dharma* is not that. Suppose some people meet together and agree that a certain manner of behaviour is good and legal, then that may become their *dharma.* Is moral teaching necessary for the world? It is going on everywhere.

* * *

Questioner: *How should I lead my life?*

Amma: Is it just a matter of speaking some words?

Q: *I must know.*

Amma: I do not teach. Self-control is not acquired through hearing lectures. We cannot do as we are told. Time alone reveals what must be done *(kartavya).* We must do whatever He causes to be done.

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Questioner: *Amma, they speak of* 'dharma'. *What is* dharma*? What* dharma *should we follow, and how?*

Amma: Every *dharma* has been given in our scriptures, my child. For all men they prohibit some actions and enjoin others, but nobody is desisting from those, which are prohibited. Man is neither performing the actions enjoined, nor is he acting in accordance with the prohibitions—he is acting according to the necessity *(avasara)* of the moment. Necessity alone is his guide. That is why I value necessity alone.

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Questioner: *In the Gita Sri Krishna told Arjuna,* 'Svadharma (*one's* dharma) *is* Atman *(one's true Self).' What is this* svadharma?

Amma: In that case it was war.

Do any of the bodily organs do the work of another? Do the eyes hear? Do the ears see? Does the nose talk? The ears hear, the eyes see, the nose smells—all these are surely *dharmas*. One is not performing the work of another. All are necessary for us. Where is any unnecessary part?

Just so, whoever is suited for some work, comes for that work. This fellow is suited for this work; that fellow is suited for some other work. Whatever He causes to be done through us, that is our *dharma*.

Non-Violence, *Dharma* and Truth

Questioner: *We approach people like you to be told about the problems of social life. Please teach us about truth* (satya), dharma *and non-violence* (ahimsa).

Amma: Your question is how are these three—truth, *dharma* and non-violence—to be put into practice in daily life isn't it? 'Putting into practice' *(nirvahana)* means 'practising' *(acharana)*.

Do you think 'violence' *(himsa)* only means murdering or torturing somebody? I say that if so-called 'violence' exists at all, it exists in ordinary life itself. Nothing that appears to us is without Life *(chaitanya)*. In the actions we do in our daily lives we cannot clearly differentiate between 'violence' and 'non-violence'. Consider a snake gourd (vegetable) for instance. We pluck the young fruits from the vine and prepare curry from them. If we leave them on the vine a few more days, they grow. They have life in them. If we believe, 'All is Life', then even our eating is violence. We eat food, and it turns into blood and excreta. There are small organisms living in the excreta even. Where is annihilation for any kind of substance? Is there any substance without its associated life? If we wish to avoid all violence, we cannot drink water or inhale air—there are microscopic organisms living in water and air—we cannot walk or eat. Life is everywhere!

Some actions may be unbearable to some people. If someone cannot tolerate something, that to him is 'violence'. One who eats vegetables such as the snake gourd cannot bear to eat meat. One who butchers goats cannot bear another butchering cows. One who butchers cows cannot tolerate another butchering dogs. There is no problem as to which is violence and which is not—whatever one cannot tolerate, that alone is violence. The truth of this is to be seen everywhere.

Dharma ... Do you think '*dharma*' means that you must practise what someone has said? They have said, 'Proceed in such-and-such a way', and, thinking you must practise it, but being unable to do so, you are grieving that you are transgressing *dharma*. This is constantly going on.

Everyone thinks that he must proceed in a certain manner, but is unable to do so. It seems as if there is another *Sakti* that is driving us. This much is certain: nothing is in our hands. Therefore *dharma* is not the way to proceed which they have told us, but That which drives us, my child. I am speaking from my own experience.

Next truth ... if you are getting a salary of twenty rupees and have six children, how will you survive in these difficult times?

Q: *We eat for a few days and fast for the rest.*

Amma: Alternatively, you may tutor privately. But will your students pay you properly? However much they have, they want to reduce the amount they are paying you. They are unconcerned about your circumstances, and never think of paying you more because you are teaching them well. Then to what extent is your honesty of use to you? Unless you commit some deception or wrong, you may not be able to carry on. Never mind—at least you want to proceed correctly yourself. Suppose you do so. The whole world is like that, isn't it? Right from the official to the peon (servant), everyone is taking bribes. When it is necessary for him, he gives; when the opportunity arises

he takes. You by yourself can do nothing. This is the *dharma* (nature) of this *yuga* (age). Even if you want to proceed differently yourself, you cannot. Though you yourself do not take bribes from anyone, those who do take will not refrain from asking you for something. You are not responsible for all this. The *dharma* of this *yuga* is making everything proceed like this. It is proceeding—that is all.

Truth and *Dharma*

Amma: Truth *(satya)* and *dharma*—are they the same, or are they two?

Questioner: *Both are the same, Amma.*

Amma: If both are the same, why do they have separate names? Please define both separately—what *dharma* is, what truth is.

Q: 'Dharma' *means the conduct prescribed in the scriptures. Everyone has his* dharma *prescribed there. To live accordingly is his* dharma.

Amma: What is truth?

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Q: Dharma *includes truth.*

Amma: Let it be so. You are an elder. I do not know how to ask questions, nor how to conduct myself. I do not understand what I hear. I do not feel that what I hear is true. This is my state.

Q: *Speak, Amma. I shall listen.*

Amma: Truth is that which is eternal.

Q: *What is* dharma*?*

Amma: One meaning is the social rules and regulations. Another meaning is the way of Destiny *(vidhi)*, which cannot be escaped however much one may wish to escape it. You say that truth too is included in *dharma*. I think the two are different. The one is not so completely included in the other that you may say it exists within the

other. But there may be unity in action, in which case for him there is no distinction.

Q: *Tell me why there isn't, Amma.*

Amma: Tell me what you think truth is .... The truth that is, the truth that thinks, and the truth that acts—the same truth is as these three. That truth alone is the eternal truth.

Q: *Is that all? Is there nothing more? I think that truth is not speaking falsely.*

Amma: I have a small question for you. Suppose there is a woman. For some reason her husband may remain in the house, but ask her to say that he is not there. He may give her ten rupees, asking her to use it for herself and not to give it to anyone else. Someone in great difficulty, starving, may ask her for some money. Now which is *dharma*? Giving, or saying she has nothing?

Q: *What peculiar problems you create, Amma.*

Amma: How do we know what kinds of problems there are in the world? The world is itself the problem. In this instance, which is *dharma* and which is truth? Obeying the husband is *dharma*. According to you, telling 'what is' as it is, is truth. These two have no relationship to one another, my child, and yet you said that both are the same, didn't you? I am asking because I do not know—please do not think otherwise. It is no longer 'Telling the truth and performing *dharma*', but rather 'Imprisoning truth and murdering *dharma*'*. Whatever it may be, that is imprisonment and this is murder!

Q: *I can say nothing, Amma. I must think about it .... Amma, what is the* dharma *of a* pativrata *(devoted wife)*?

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* A pun. The same saying has the first meaning in Sanskrit and the second meaning In Telugu.

Amma: You want me to tell you? I am not following that path, nevertheless I will tell you. Perhaps only if her husband is devoted to her does she become a supreme *pativrata*. That may not be so with everyone. Do you know what kind of status I give to a husband? — The Creator himself in a visible form. I believe every woman has the same *bhava* (attitude).

Q: *Yes, Amma, but there are some precepts she must follow.*

Amma: Tell me what they are.

Q: *As soon as the husband awakens she must attend to him. Before going to bed she must worship his feet ... . There are so many things to tell: it will take much time. She must worship none but her husband.*

Amma: The husband may be stationed elsewhere. Then what? Furthermore what must she do if he dies as soon as the marriage ceremony is over? What of their vows *(vratas)*? Have they any basis *(adhara)*! Some may have been hindered from marrying. What are their vows? Whom should they worship?

Q: *It's beyond me. When you asked about husbands who are not at home, you killed ...*

Amma: What killing? Even though I cannot practise, I still wish to listen to great ones.

Q: *What is there you do not know, Mother?*

Amma: This praise does not dispel my doubts.

God Has Created Sin and Virtue

Questioner A: *What are sin* (papa) *and virtues* (punya)?

Amma: If you consider it a sin to harm other living beings, then wherever you cause harm there is sin. If you consider Life to be everywhere, there is sin everywhere.

When someone performs a certain sacrifice he has to offer a goat. According to the sacred tradition, he must perform the sacrifice—it is an important ceremony—so he must have a goat. He goes in search of a goat fit for sacrifice, and then he sacrifices it while chanting sacred *mantras*, and offers it to the gods. If we consider killing animals a sin, then this is a sin, isn't it? Another fellow may slaughter a goat to eat the flesh. In both cases life is taken. In this killing, where is sin and where is virtue?

Now let us consider that aspect of injuring which involves the mind. Sometimes, in spite of the fact that a person feels hurt, a certain action is done for his benefit. When a man's feelings are injured, although the act was done to help him, he suffers in the same way as when another cruelly humiliates him. He suffers when something is done to benefit him, and he suffers when something is done to humiliate him. The intentions differ, but the effect is the same: his feelings are hurt.

Suppose there is a murder—a man is killed in hatred. In another instance a man driving a vehicle runs over a man unintentionally and kills him. In both cases life is taken. In a third instance one man wishes to kill another man, but the blow accidentally falls on a third person and kills him. It is here that they introduce the doctrine of *karma* (action and consequence). *Karma* doctrine says that if I do something good (or bad) to you, it is because you have already done something good (or bad) to me—it is a result of actions in some previous life. But suppose, as sometimes happens, the wrong man is tried for murder. The fellow who actually committed the crime runs away and the wrong man is caught, tried and sentenced to death. Then who commits the sin? Is it the one who catches him, the one who sentences him to death, or is it the one who presses the switch? Whose is the sin? Whose fault is it? Who is responsible for all this? I am only enquiring. I am not coming to any conclusion. I am not pointing out anyone as the guilty one. I cannot do that. If the

wrong fellow is caught, who is responsible? I feel that God alone is responsible for all this. So what is God-like? I feel that God is Time *(kala)*. Time is the cause of everything—of both sin and virtue.

A: *Because He allows it to happen?*

Amma: Because there is none greater than He.

A: *Then why does He permit wrongs?*

Amma: God is Creation. This Creation includes right and wrong, sin and virtue. He creates all these. It is something like a card game—each card is assigned a certain value. According to the game, we assign a value to each card. To play another game, we must assign different values to the cards. Consider cotton—in one state it is a sari, in other states a sheet or a shirt—it appears in all these forms.

B: *To feel that some Supreme Power does everything—is that the same as not knowing why everything is happening as it is?*

Amma: In the final analysis they are the same. When you say, 'I do not know why all this is happening', in the final analysis that 'why' is God. One side of the coin is 'I do not know why all this is happening'; the other side of the coin is 'God is doing all this'. That 'why' is God.

A: *If God does it, He is duality.*

Amma: He is all these—duality also.

A: *But wise men say God is love.*

Amma: This body has life—blood, bones, marrow and cells—so many parts. They are involved in innumerable processes within the body. Each person has so many parts, so many cells. Food enters from outside and enables the body to grow. The food taken in changes into so many forms—blood, marrow, urine, faeces, flesh ... There is no greater miracle than this. This body with its hair, nose, eyes, mouth, and so forth, is formed in the womb in nine months. All its organs are formed there in the womb. Nothing new is added

after it leaves the womb—whatever has already formed, grows. How is this body so perfectly formed in the womb? Is there any answer to that question? If there is any defect, the doctor can say how and why it happened, but none can say how it became so perfect. Suppose we analyse the substance of which a baby is made—why it changes, why it is red, why black—from that substance the human body is formed. What could be more miraculous than this?

The buffalo eats hay and gives you milk. We can't extract milk from hay, but when it is eaten by the animal it becomes blood, and then that transforms into milk. If the animal is given suitable fodder, we get good milk with plenty of butter in it. There is no butter in the food—a process takes place in the body of the buffalo and we get milk; then we churn the milk and get butter.

These are the reasons why I say: 'Creation is God; God is Creation.'

Vices Are Our Innate Nature

Questioner: *Are the changes in a man due to his past lives, or to his environment? The effects of the six vices* (arishadvargas)* *are never effaced.*

Amma: Everyone has the vices. That is man's *svabhava* (inherent nature). There is no one without them. He has Himself given them. I do not think that they result from past lives or from the environment. That same *Sakti* which caused his coming, also causes his actions. Those raised in extraordinary surroundings may live ordinary lives; there are some living extraordinary lives, which were raised in ordinary surroundings. I cannot judge. I say that everything is the effect of *Sakti* alone.

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* Literally means 'the six enemies'—lust, wrath, greed, delusion, pride and envy.

Q: *How are the vices to be conquered?*

Amma: You consider them abnormal, so they frighten you. I consider them normal, so I do not know how to conquer them.

Q: *We haven't attained your level.*

Amma: Is 'not thinking about them' a level?

Q: *Do you want us to sit quietly without doing anything, surrendering everything to the Supreme Will?*

Amma: Even surrender is not in your hands.

Q: *Then what should we do?*

Amma: Do whatever you are impelled to do, for isn't it He that impels you? You are not responsible for what you consider to be 'your' actions; He alone is responsible who bestowed such a disposition *(guna)* on you and impels you to act. Even if someone does what you call 'evil', I feel that the 'fault' is not his, but rather his Maker's.

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Amma: You cannot do anything, good or bad, unless your *svabhava* impels you to do it. When you are so impelled, nothing—not even yourself—can prevent it. Until you are so impelled, your wishes remain only wishes.

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Q: *The world does not understand me, Amma.*

Amma: Endeavour to understand yourself first. There is no necessity for the world to understand you. If you understand your inner 'enemies' *(arishadvargas)*, you shall have not an enemy in the world.

Selfishness

Questioner: *Amma, what does 'selfishness'* (svartha) *mean?*

Amma: Whatever be the meaning usually given for that word, to me 'selfishness' means 'doing something for one's own sake'. Whatever one does—good or bad, eating or not eating, resting, getting angry, loving or hating—everything is done for one's own sake. Suppose someone prepares some food—whether he eats it himself or gives it to others, it is all for his own sake. Doesn't he derive pleasure *(ananda)* from sharing it with others? Even if a mother starves herself to feed her child, it is for her pleasure and her satisfaction *(tripti)* alone. Even the wife's obedience to her husband is for her own sake. Who derives pleasure from that? She alone. Whether one hates or loves, it is for one's own satisfaction. Even when you yearn for God and worship Him, it is for your own sake.

Q: *Are there no selfless people?*

Amma: I do not think there is anyone without selfishness. Selfishness is man's *svabhava.* Each person has his own kind.

Q: *Do you too have selfishness?*

Amma: Why not, my child? There is selfishness in me. What is selfishness in my case? My gathering you near me like this and feeding you is not for your sake, but for my own satisfaction. If you eat, I am satisfied; if you do not, I suffer. Sitting with you, conversing and answering your questions—all this is for my own pleasure. My concern whether the living conditions here suits you or not is also for my own pleasure. So how can I say there is no selfishness in me? Whatever the reason, there is no difference between you and me.

Q: *What do you think about, Amma?*

Amma: About your food. (Laughter.) Yes, my child, it really is so—whether you have eaten today or not.

Q: *Have you no desires?*

Amma: Yes, I have them. Isn't it a desire to wish to feed you well with vegetables and chutney, and to give you curd instead of the very dilute buttermilk I'm always giving you with your meals? This is all I think about, my child.

Q: *Have you no desire for fame?*

Amma: Perhaps you may think so. I'm not responsible for what you think. If you prefer to think like that, I cannot undeceive you. But I do not feel like striving for fame; I do what is necessary. If a man comes naked to me, I might tear off a part of my sari to cover his nakedness. To an onlooker it may look as though I am seeking fame, but there are no words to express my intentions. I never think about what people think of me. As it occurs to me, so I act. As mother it is my duty *(dharma)* to feed all who come here and to send them away with affection. If a few people are fed in that way, it may spread as fame. If someone has done something that he feels is necessary, it isn't his fault if others think that he did it seeking fame, is it? Suppose someone distributes drinking water to thirsty travellers in a desert—he may feel it is necessary for him to do that, but others may say that he does it for fame. Thus anything done by a person to fill a need may get transformed into fame. In my case too, I can say only this much.

Anger

Amma: When one does not trust another's word, that is the source of rage, the source of rivalry, and the source of grief.

Suppose a child desires something. As soon as the mother says, 'No', he gets displeased, he pulls a long face, he pesters, then he starts crying, and finally he becomes violent. He follows this path to get what he wants. Though it proceeds differently according to the situation, this alone is what turns into enmity, makes one go to court,

causes wars to be waged and takes lives. For all these the cause is difference of opinion.

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Questioner: *I cannot get rid of my anger* (kopa), *Amma.*

Amma: All right, let it be.

Q: *But how will it go?*

Amma: Time alone—if the time comes, it goes of its own accord. If someone with more anger than you comes, it goes of its own accord.

Q: *But so far, even in my job, both my subordinates and my superiors are yielding.*

Amma: You direct your anger at those who are inferior to you (in that respect). What can you do but yield if someone more violent in his temper turns up? It is always the same: with everyone it is like that. Your family are good people—there is no one who will answer you back.

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Q: *Amma, do you have anger?*

Amma: More than your share. I have it in plenty. Where does it come from? It comes from within when our thoughts collide. There is nobody free from anger—to err is man's *svabhava.*

Sometimes I may say, 'Lately I have often been getting angry', or again I may say, 'If I got angry, where would all of you be?' According to the time and circumstances I may seem angry, but in fact I never feel anger towards any of you. The day anger grips me, I shall no longer be Amma, and I shall not be here like this.

God Has Given the Vices and the Desire To Be Rid of Them

Questioner: Amma, please tell us some path to purify the mind and conquer the six vices *(arishadvargas).* We are in this *samsara*

(worldly life) .... *If you tell us some path, we shall want to practise it ourselves.*

Amma: Just being, without torturing ourselves about the vices, but rather thinking, 'These are what He has given'. Only for him who thinks, 'Whatever the vices are, they are obstacles, they are useless, they must be conquered. There is a God whom I have not understood and whom I must attain. For that these must be conquered', are the vices obstacles. He who has no interest in God, who does not feel that the vices must be conquered to reach Him, does not feel they are obstacles, does he? He feels they are all right.

In fact He has given even the *bhava* (attitude), 'I must conquer the vices. I must attain Him by conquering them'. Where else could it have come from? Even God, is He giving this *bhava* to everyone? No. He who has given that *bhava*, has Himself given these *gunas* (qualities) also, the *gunas* which you consider useless. Keeping this fact in mind is itself the path.

They say that I have not told (any path). But what I speak of is a far more difficult and far more direct path than all those paths which attribute responsibility to man and tell him, 'the vices must be conquered and the mind purified'. In fact, all the paths mentioned in all the books and scriptures are the same path, but told with unnecessary twists and complications. When there is purity of mind, what necessity is there for that God? Will not God Himself come to him? In fact, 'God' means none other than 'himself'. What more need be said to such a man?

Q: *So the path of which you speak is for us to accept and embrace whatever changes come to us.*

Amma: Yes, that's all .... But is it so easy to keep in mind that He has Himself given the mind its unsteadiness? In fact it is very difficult, more difficult than anything else, more difficult than conquering the six vices even. 'God, remove those *gunas* which make you seem so far away,

out of reach'—that God who has bestowed those *gunas* as well as this desire (to be rid of them) is Himself praying. Doesn't '*namaskara*' (salutation) mean always keeping in mind? Keeping in mind that He has Himself given even those *gunas* and this unsteadiness?

Q: *Amma, that unsteadiness is itself an obstacle to that remembrance!*

Amma: Yes. But even though it may be forgotten then, you will remember afterwards, won't you? So gradually it (i.e., remembrance) becomes habitual, and finally the unsteadiness yields and disappears.

If God is fulfilling so many desires when prayed to, why does He leave only this one unfulfilled? When will it be fulfilled? When the *taruna* (opportune moment) comes. When He feels it necessary.

Q: *Do you mean that the vices, which had been obstacles to that awareness, cease to be obstacles? Or is that awareness still there, even though they are obstacles?*

Amma: How can they be obstacles if that *awareness* is there? If they are obstacles, isn't it as if there is no awareness at all?

Q: *That means they don't function in one who has full awareness, isn't it? So he has no need to think that God is making him do wrong, has he?*

Amma: Yes, that's right. When there is the full *awareness* that He alone is doing everything only if he feels differently does it appear to him that he is doing wrong.

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Amma: Whatever the path *(marga)* along which you are proceeding, if you think, 'He is making me proceed this way', it is the path of virtue *(san-marga)*.

Desire and Necessity

Amma: You are doctors. You are constantly studying the body and its diseases. Every day you are cutting open those bodies. While looking at it you think, 'So this is the human body. What is there to it after all?' But as soon as you leave the room you forget all this and again succumb to physical desire *(vyamoha)*. Herein lies the greatness of Creation.

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Amma: Do you think that by simply running away to a forest, or closing your eyes, the mind can be rid of physical desires? What happened to the great masters of *tapas* (penance) like Visvamitra and Agastya*? Even the animals that move about you in the lonely forest are enough to provoke your innate desires. Physical desires are natural: they are the cause of your birth—you are their product.

* * *

Questioner: *My mind is too restless for spiritual practice. I am attempting to control the senses* (indriyas) *and have stopped going to cinemas and restaurants. Even so, my mind remains unsteady. What shall I do?*

Amma: Free yourself from inhibitions, then all these perplexities will not exist. Experience whatever happens to you, and think, 'God is making it happen'. The more restrictions we impose on ourselves, the more they pursue us. When you have a fever and certain foods are prohibited, your mind constantly broods over them. The mind runs after whatever is prohibited. Restlessness gives way to calm when the thought arises, 'God is causing everything to be done'.

You have not had these thoughts from the beginning, have you? They came unexpectedly. When you, who once thought only of

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* In spite of his intense *tapas*, the great sage Agastya was aroused by the sight of two fish, mating.

cinemas and restaurants, are changed to thinking this way, is that not a change? I do not say that those habits are wrong, but so long as you perceive dualistically you cannot but think in terms of 'right' and 'wrong'. At first you did not have these thoughts. The way It has given these thoughts is the way It gives everything.

* * *

Questioner: *Is there nothing beyond* raga *(attachment, love) and* dvesha *(aversion, hate)*?

Amma: These two are the basis *(adhara)* for life, and 'I' is the basis for these two. 'Love' means thinking, 'I want that. That is mine. That is the same as me'. In a way even hate is love. For example, wanting to kill someone is hate, yet even so it is a desire. For the sake of killing, he loves the knife, he loves the poison. He searches for them, and, if he cannot find them, he weeps and does not eat. He cannot bear to look at the one he wants to kill. To him violence *himsa* is itself worship *(aradhana)*. But to another who cannot view it in this way, it is violence. The one whom he wants to kill, the other wants to help. What he wants, the other hates. What he hates at one time becomes a necessity some other time. A substance, which is *amrita* (ambrosia) at one time, becomes poison some other time. Even *gunas* (qualities) change with time. The snake is known as a venomous animal, but it can be a lifesaver too. The venom may take life at one time and save life some other time.

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Q: *Drinking has ruined his health.*

Amma: I do not think that drinking is the sole cause for his health getting ruined. There is nothing bad or useless in Creation. Even what we regard as 'useless and bad' at one time, becomes a necessity at some other time. And if one thing is useful at one time, another thing becomes useful at yet another time. Everything is useful, but those things are to be used in a limited way, depending on the

circumstances. Consider poison—under certain critical circumstances a single drop works like *amrita* (ambrosia); only when in excess does it become poisonous. Though we use salt for taste, we use it in moderation. It is the same with everything. Everything is necessary in Creation. That is why they have been created. There is not a single unnecessary thing in Creation.

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Amma: We cannot say, 'Marriage is auspicious *(subha)* and death inauspicious *(asubha).*' If the husband disappears as soon as the marriage has been performed, how can we call that marriage 'auspicious'? For one person smoking is auspicious; for another it is inauspicious. Smoking, chewing betel leaves and drinking may seem like vices to one person, and like auspicious delights to another. So everything is auspicious; everything is a delight. What is so inauspicious about death? The death of Narakasura (the demon king) was auspicious for everyone, wasn't it?

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Amma: 'Danger' *(pramada)* means 'the unknown'. When it is said that the moment to come is dangerous, or that the world is dangerous, it means that not knowing is itself the danger. Whatever it be, good or bad, correctly speaking it is 'danger' whenever something happens which is other than what you expect. Suppose you decide on the auspicious time *(lagna)* for a marriage—if the auspicious time passes and the marriage has not taken place, we think that a great danger has presented itself. Do we think that there is danger in the marriage taking place? No, something other than we expected is happening. The time interval is the 'danger'. In ordinary conversation we take 'danger' to mean 'trouble'.

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(One day Amma saw the game of snakes and ladders, which her son had brought.)

Amma: Good and bad—if these opposites *(dvandvas)* did not exist, would anything exist? If there were no bad, there would be no good. If there were no good, there would be no bad. In my view there are 'more' and 'less', but no (absolute) 'good' and 'bad'. If everything were the same, how could we know the pleasure there is in the opposites? The ladders have so much value in this game, only because of the snakes by their side.

(That day Amma played a game of snakes and ladders. She won without climbing any ladders or being bitten by any snakes.)

Amma: After winning, what is there? If you win, they do not give you any more coins to hold, do they? My game has ended. Not to have won would have been better. Climbing ladders and being bitten by snakes—the one is joy, the other is sorrow. What good is it if these opposites do not exist? Isn't it always so that alongside each happiness is a hidden suffering. Whoever designed this game has shown all of life therein. Look how remarkable it is—ladders exist only by the side of snakes! The union of hardship and well-being (which is life) is like that.

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Amma: If there were nothing, there would be no difficulty. Love *(prema)* exists, doesn't it? Along with that, there cannot fail to be a second. Anger *(kopa)* does not exist separately, does it? When you are overflowing with love what do you do? You kiss. If the one kissed does not come closer, you get angry. Love has become the source *(mula)* of anger.

To Want Nothing Is To Want Everything

Amma: Conquering the tongue is happily eating whatever is available. Isn't wanting to renounce the desire for something also a desire? Even if one says, 'I will eat only neem leaves (which are bitter),' it expresses a desire, doesn't it? Even if one says, 'I will sleep on the floor, not in a bed,' it is still a desire, isn't it? Saying that

you want no clothes other than (the ascetic's) ochre robes is also a desire. Whatever man does, he does for his own sake. He thinks, 'I am renouncing for the sake of others,' but he alone derives satisfaction and pleasure from it. He renounces solely to get that pleasure.

Experiencing whatever comes, without getting tarnished by it, that alone is renunciation. Renunciation is not being afraid of anything. To forget 'me' and 'mine' is also renunciation. When there is renunciation in a certain respect, but not in others, we say, 'How fine is his renunciation in that matter!' Renunciation in everything is the ultimate stage. To want nothing is renunciation; to want everything is renunciation. Any *sampurna* (complete, perfect) state is renunciation.

You all talk of conquering and slaying desires. I do not feel that way: I want everything and everyone. I do not want to be without *(rahita)* all these; I want to be with *(sahita)* them.

Creation is beginningless *(anadi)*. Creation is Mine *(nadi)*—not another's—Mine alone.

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Questioner: *What is the difference between man and God?*

Amma: Man wants some things; God wants everything.

God Has Produced Even 'The Fall'

Questioner: *God created Nature, and there is Divinity in everything. Then why is man Nature's bonded slave? Why does he fall, overcome by Nature's impulses?*

Amma: Even the fall is produced by God. As you said, God created Nature, and Nature is God. By 'Nature' we mean 'all that is perceived'. We are a part of what is perceived. We are in Nature.

Q: *But man controls Nature.*

Amma: Man is, after all, a part of Nature. God has created man in Nature, and also, all around him, the things he needs. Nature is useful to man. So where does he fall from?

Q: *But many* yogis *do experience a fall.*

Amma: Why call it a 'fall'? He impels everyone to do just what is necessary for him. You could call it 'his' defeat only if everything accomplished until then was his own achievement.

Q: *In God's view all are His children. Can't He impel His children to do only good? Why should some of them sin?*

Amma: There can be no Creation without variety. Good and evil, sin and virtue, before and after—all exist for that same reason.

Q: *But can't* moksha *(liberation) be granted to all at once?*

Amma: We presume that there is such a thing as *moksha* only on the authority of the scriptures. What method did the writers prescribe to attain it?

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Q: *(Points to a* sadhu *[holy man].) This person is higher than me by a few stages. He is able to renounce everything and become a* sadhu *owing to the merit he accumulated in his former lives. I am not like that. And there may be still greater souls.*

Amma: I find no difference between you, he and me. God gave the *sadhu* such a life and so he is like that. You are like this because He gave you such a life. I have never said that *sugati* (salvation) is only for those who lead their lives in such-and-such a way. I have said that *sugati* is for all, for sinners as well as saints. I don't think that it rests in man's hands to do good or evil. We do as He who created us makes us do. So whether I am praised or slandered I look upon it in the same way. I feel that neither the criticizing nor the impulse to criticize is yours. To me, both devotees and critics are the same, irrespective of what they think of me. In my view this *sadhu* has no

special place, nor is such a place denied to you because you are unlike him.

The *Avatara*—He Alone Decides When To Come

Q: *Lord Krishna declares (in the Bhagavad Gita) that in every age when there is disorder He takes birth in human form to destroy the wicked, protect the good and re-establish order. There is disorder now. Why doesn't He restore order now?*

Amma: Disorder must reach its extreme. What is the indication of that? The fallen state can't be recognized while it lasts. Unless one stage changes into another, it can't be recognized. He promised to descend when disorder is supreme. He comes when He decides, not when we wish it.

Q: *But didn't He promise to come when there is disorder?*

Amma: Don't quote His words while expressing your opinion that there is disorder. In your opinion the world is in a fallen state, but He doesn't feel so. He promised to come when righteousness is lost. If it has already been lost, He must have come already and we might have failed to recognize Him. Even while He dwelt on Earth He could have been ripening the disorder. If He hasn't appeared, it means that disorder is not yet ripe.

Of late there has been an observable change in society: everyone is repenting for the sins he is committing, but is unable to desist from them. Even those who have themselves fallen are complaining that the world has fallen, aren't they? When everyone of his own accord desists from evil, we can take it that He has descended.

Q: *When will He come?*

Amma: I don't know.

Q: *You are surely the Universal Mother; please tell me at least roughly when He will come.*

Amma: I don't think that He is not here now and will come some other time. Even, the fall may be caused by Him while He dwells on Earth.

'He' Alone Creates and Destroys

Questioner: *Why are there* Avataras?

Amma: What do Rama's Ayodhya and Krishna's Dwaraka* amount to in all this wide world?... and there was Jesus too ... The Puranas tell us that each one said that He had come for a particular reason *(karana)*—to save the virtuous and punish the wicked. And yet they did not destroy the whole world, did they? *Rakshasas* (demons)** are perhaps present everywhere, although apparently they caused trouble only at a certain place. Where is a single place without any *rakshasas*? Who created the *rakshasas*? The Bhagavad Gita says that Krishna created them. Then did He destroy what He had Himself created? He alone created them, didn't He? Can't He kill them?

However, same *dharmas* (principles of right living) exist. They (the *Avataras*) came to make *dharma* useful to the world. Rama's deeds benefited the people of his native land; his principles may be adopted by peoples of all lands. He said that He comes whenever *dharma* is in danger of being overpowered by *adharma* (unrighteousness). He being the Creator, how can *adharma* succeed without His knowledge? If nothing happens without His Decision (*nirnaya*), if all this Creation has come into being through His Will (*sankalpa*), how can there be a decline of *dharma* without His Decision? If it is His Decision, how can it be called a 'decline of *dharma*'? Furthermore, if He can will the Creation into existence without manifesting Himself in a human form, why can't He uphold

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* The capitals of their kingdoms.

** Signifying evil forces. In the Puranas (religious epics) the *rakshasas* are the foes of Krishna.

dharma without manifesting in a localized form? I say that His coming is not dependent on any considerations of *dharma* or *adharma*, but that He Himself determines the time when He should come.

Q: *Having created life, why destroy it?*

Amma: Why does one who has been born, grow? It is *svabhava* (inherent nature).

Q: *Is it the Creator's* leela *(sport)*?

Amma: Do you mean that He exists as one and is playing alone? The Doer, the doing, and what is done—aren't they all One? Aren't the doing and what is done, both in the Doer? When He has become everything, what is *leela*? I say it is natural *(sahaja)* for Him, just as to be fragrant is natural for the jasmine flower. It is natural for Creation to become Creation. 'Natural' means 'arising with birth'.

Q: *Then why are there* Avataras?

Amma: They announced that they had come for some particular reasons. There is no argument about whether *Avataras* are a fact or not, but it seems also to be a fact that He alone has created and He alone has destroyed. There are no satisfactory answers.

'He' Acts a Role in 'His' Own Drama

Questioner: *If everything is completely determined and unalterable, what do miracles mean? Haven't saints raised the dead? The Supreme Will* (sankalpa) *is said to manifest sometimes in human form as* Avataras. *That Supreme Will must be able to alter Its Decision* (nirnaya), *otherwise It would not be Supreme.*

Amma: The Supreme Will can alter Its Decision when It so decides. But if He wished to alter His Will even slightly, then it would not be the Supreme Will, but only a fancy like ours.

In my view, what you term 'miracles' are not the only miracles. What is more miraculous than this Creation? In fact the development of pollen within flowers and of the foetus in the womb are just as miraculous. Creation is itself a miracle that is taking place every moment. All those so-called 'miracles' are only parts of Creation. Only because they are determined, do they occur. Even the *Avataras*—their coming into being and their deeds are completely determined.

People say that an *Avatara* comes to bring about change whenever the burden of sin *(papa)* becomes extreme. I say that He comes again only when the interval, which He Himself has determined has run its course.

Suppose that there is a drama, and that it becomes necessary for even the fellow who wrote it to act a role in that drama. Whatever role comes to him—be it a sorrowful role, or any other—he must act that role, mustn't he? He himself wrote the drama, so he knows—he knows everything, yet he takes on a role. Even though he knows all that is to happen, what happens is that while quietly looking on he performs his role. When he writes a drama, he identifies himself with the drama, the director, the actors, the stage, the curtains the audience .... But when it becomes necessary for him to act some role in that drama, he comes in that role too, the One that originally determined everything, is bound by His Decision. Without rules there can be no game, can there be?

Reality *(asalu)* always exists. But whereas Reality is understood only by he who becomes Reality, *Avatara* is for everyone to recognize. They say that all this is *leela* (His sport). As soon as He assumes a form, He becomes bound *(baddha)*. As and when a form becomes necessary, He must be bound by the Decision. Sari, blouse, dhoti and shawl—all these then become necessary.

One who has Himself, without a reason *(karana)*, become everything, which has become all reasons, everything having become

His alone—such a One is a *purna* (full, complete) *Avatara.* One, who comes, having announced a reason, is a *karana Avatara.* Everyone is an *Avatara,* but the appropriate time must come. If all come into being at once, where is Creation? Only those for whom the time comes ... .

Mother's *Dharma*

Amma: I have not come on behalf of any particular *dharma.* I think that I have come for mother's *(talli) dharma.* This form is that. Because that is the position, everyone is to me a child, whatever he is like. It is not your seeking me; I must seek you. That is my responsibility. Because there is nothing that is yours, I say there is the same *sugati* (good fate) for everyone. Even if you get smeared with mud—whatever you get smeared with—the responsibility for cleansing you is mine. For that, motherliness *(matritatva)* has become necessary. I have come.

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Amma: When *tatva* (the essential nature) is itself love *(prema),* how can there be love for one and not for another? It loves all. Finally it loves the very knife used to kill it. It is not the Mother's *(Talli's)* love; love is itself the Mother. That, which never changes, whatever happens, is love. Wherever there exists that which never wavers, is an embodiment *(svarupa)* of the Mother.

Look at that tree: it provides shade equally to all—to good people and to bad people. It provides shade equally to all who seek shelter.

As mother, whatever kind of person he is, I must draw him near. I do not say that there are no dualities *(dvandvas)* like good and bad, black and white, in this world; I say only that to me they are all equal *(samana).* That is why I so gently chide those whom

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* A pun: *mandalistanu,* I chide; *mandulistanu,* I give medicines.

you consider 'bad'. I give medicines* where there is disease. Will I abandon a child simply because he is bad? But then, will I remain without chiding him? On the one hand I chide him; on the other hand I draw him near, caressing him. Such is a mother's character *(guna)*. There is no contradiction as you suppose.

We say, 'A mother beats, feeds and scolds.' Even punishment *(sikshana)* is protection *(rakshana)*. Protection is always there. It is not the Mother's *(Talli's)* protection; protection is itself the Mother. You feel it is there when things happen as you wish; otherwise you feel it is absent.

The doctor prescribes medicine, not only according to your disease—he must also consider your physical constitution. A mother may punish without punishing. Even though you do not recognize it, punishment may be there, and yet it is never devoid of protection. Sometimes she may beat the child and then give him a piece of sugar. Punishment does not mean only beating and scolding—in my view becoming better is itself punishment.

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Liberation and Love

Questioner: *Why don't even our most sustained efforts succeed in breaking our fetters* (bandhas)?

Amma: Because they come with your birth. They are *svabhava* (innate nature) itself.

Q: *These mental fetters are due to love* (prema) *alone, I think.*

Amma: Love always exists. The mind knows what is 'bad', and loves that state which is devoid of 'bad'. Love is not anything extraordinary: it is the mind's *svabhava* to love something or the other.

Q: *Is love the cause for hate* (dvesha) *also?*

Amma: For the sake of this, you love that. For the sake of killing, the killer loves the knife and the poison.

Q: *May we consider love to be God?*

Amma: You may. But I consider both love and hate to be God. You cannot have faith in everything, so you choose some. God does not have such-and-such a quality *(guna)* or such-and-such a form *(rupa)*, because all forms and qualities are His. Because you cannot worship Him as everything, you choose a limited form.

Q: *Why do both good and bad exist in Creation?*

Amma: Whatever it is to which we are applying the name 'God', That has Itself become everything. He does not have just a single form. But we cannot worship everything, therefore we choose the form that we like.

Why do darkness and light exist as two? If there were always light, we would become ill. So darkness is necessary. In winter cold water brings suffering; in summer it brings happiness. Were there no opposites *(dvandvas)*, there would be no Creation. Creation *is* the opposites. Whatever is needed at a particular time brings happiness.

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Q: *What is* moksha *(spiritual liberation)*?

Amma: The *bhava* (attitude), 'All these opposites are His forms', arises, and remains permanently. *'Moksha'* does not mean a certain place or country or dwelling or locality. There is no approaching it—wherever you are it is there. Feeling, 'That One has Itself become both', alone is *moksha*. Flower and fruit may differ, but the tree has only the one root *(mula)*. *Mumukshatva* (the yearning for *moksha*) is itself *moksha*.

What is called '*moksha*' is not arriving at a place where one stays for some time. That I will not accept. I am unable to think, 'The opposites must be rooted out'. Amma tells you to expand your fetters if possible. Even, if you renounce your family, you will want the shade of some tree, or, if not that, the shelter of some rock. Even if you do not want clothes, a loincloth at least is unavoidable. Although you may not want a silver tumbler to drink water from,

you will need at least a coconut shell. Although the article changes, the intention *(abhipraya)* does not disappear. Accept graciously whatever is available. The state of discriminating between not wanting that, and wanting this, is the state of the experiencer. 'Today they may throw flowers, tomorrow stones. Anything is all right'—such impartiality *(samatva)* must become natural *(sahaja)* for the mind.

Q: *They say that* Maharshis *(saints) have undertaken* tapas *(austerity, penance) to overcome the opposites.*

Amma: That is one kind of method. There are so many kinds of *sadhana* (spiritual practice). *Tapas* says, 'Renounce all this.' The intention *(abhipraya)* is that it will disappear. It is presumed that if you learn to think that you do not want, the want will go. I say that not wanting anything is the same as wanting everything. I think, 'I want everything, I want you, and I want to give to you (for my own sake).' I am Amma, not a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant). They want *moksha.* I am Amma. I want children. I am not thinking, 'I do not want all this.' I have no desire to understand God, no yearning *(tapatraya)* to gain *moksha.* I feel that all forms are His, that He became, and is everything. You take only one (of a pair of opposites), to be God; I feel both are He. It is not as if God exists only as the moonlit nights; He exists as the moonless nights also. God exists, as pure water, but even as foul water; not only as food, but even as faeces. Don't even the organisms within a boil have life *(chaitanya)*? They too are His embodiment *(svarupa).* They say, 'I do not want anything'; I think, 'I want everything.'

Q: *They speak of 'universal love', how is it obtained?*

Amma: In me there is neither the desire nor the effort to get that universal love. I do not know whether that could be termed a '*sadhana*' or a 'path' *(marga).* Just as you are struggling for your family, so too am I anxiously yearning *(tapatraya tapana)* for you all. You think of a limited family; I think of all this as a 'universal family'. I feel that all of you are my children. In the same way that

you feel for your children, I feel for you all. Not that it is a *sadhana* for *moksha*. No effort is involved. There is no thought that anything will result from it.

Why do you love your family? You love your mother, your wife and all your children for your own sake, for your own joy *(ananda)*. It is the same in my case. I love for my own sake. This is natural *(sahaja)*. It is the *svabhava* of the bulb to glow when the switch is turned on. Just so, there is neither cause nor motive for me to love.

Q: *You say love is causeless. Does hate have a cause?*

Amma: If everyone is hated without cause every second of the day, then there is no difference between hate and love. How is love to be defined? For me it is natural to love. Ant, fly, buffalo, door—love arises for all these. I have not seen God. Indeed there is no effort to see Him. I see none other than all of you. In Creation, love and hate are like 'yes' and 'no'.

Q: *Good and bad exist, don't they, Amma? If someone is going on a wrong path, will Amma change it?*

Amma: When I decide. When I think it is such. When something becomes necessary, we do it, don't we? Suppose, someone is sick, my child. When that kind of necessity has arisen, it is natural to look for medicine. There are some who think they are ill, but are not. In such a case if medicine is thought necessary, it is given for the mentality *(manastatva)*; we do not give it for the body. It is the same as giving food when hungry, or a drink when thirsty—that's all. A ten-year-old boy asks his mother for food; the mother herself goes and gives milk to a baby. A child who has begun to discriminate asks for a particular curry; the mother goes and gives it to one who cannot do so.

Q: *Since in your view good and bad are equal, will everyone gain* moksha?

Amma: There is a certain man who believes in duty. Honesty is his goal. He views equally any hardships or pleasures that come his way. I would call him a *mumukshuvu* (one who yearns for *moksha*).

Q: *Do spiritual powers form completely naturally, or separately?*

Amma: All power is That alone. There are people who undertake the discipline of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) to gain powers. I do not say that they do not exist, but only if it becomes possible may anything be done. Mustn't even *sadhana* become possible to do? Suppose you want to do *japa* (repeat *mantras*)—you must wake up, take hold of the rosary and sit cross-legged. Only if you are awake can the alarm awaken you; it cannot awaken one who is in very sound sleep.

If you ask me which *sadhana* is best, I say all are great. There is nothing like one being better than another. For one it is *nama* (repeating a name of God), for another *dhyana* (meditation); for one it is singing, for another it is *pranayama* (breath control). Whatever it is, you should have the state, 'There is nothing more than this.' A question may arise here: 'Is it *sadhana* if a fellow plays cards all twenty-four hours of the day?' He thinks, 'There is no other world, no other path than card playing. This is itself what He has given.' He has no other thought. One fellow's practice may be killing all the time; another's goal may be continuous drinking .... To be specific, anything is *sadhana* if done always without inner cowardice, without hesitation, without the doubt 'I am erring', without uncertainty, and without anything different (occurring to the mind).

The Good We Want to Do, We Cannot Do

Questioner: *Isn't idol worship wrong?*

Amma: I do not say that anything is wrong. I never tell anybody not to do anything. I always say that whatever anyone can do is right.

Q: *May we commit murders?*

Amma: Even if you committed murders, I would not say it was wrong.

Q: *But right and wrong exist, don't they?*

Amma: Greater and lesser exist, don't they? Good and bad, right and wrong—the opposites *(dvandvas)* always exist. The opposites are the basis for Creation. Doesn't 'walking' mean one foot 'in front' and the other foot 'behind'? In fact, if there is no *vyashtitva* (differentiation), where is Creation? If all were the same, He would have nothing to do! If there were no variety, there would be no Creation. When you prepare a savoury dish, what will it taste like if you put in more salt than flour? Only if the appropriate proportions are used will it taste all right.

Q: *Should everyone do as he wishes?*

Amma: If everyone can do as he wishes, what more is there? If he thinks he can kill, let him kill a dozen people a day—let us see! Suppose one man prays to God that his wealth be kept secure, while another prays that he be enabled to steal it—which should He deny? If everyone could do whatever he wished, then nothing more would remain to be desired. Everything is driven by a single Power. You may call It 'Volition', 'Impulsion', '*Sakti*' (Energy) or 'God'. You may give It any name you like. Atheists call It '*Svabhava*' (innate nature). However despite there being many names, *Sakti* is One.

Q: *Are all the moral teachings useless?*

Amma: They have told you which actions are fruitful, but can you do them? They have told us which actions lead to heaven, but even though we know we would acquire *punya* (merit) thereby, we cannot do them, can we? We cannot desist from evil, even though we know we acquire *papa* (sin) thereby.

Q: *Then won't we go to the higher realms?*

Amma: We do not know whether any higher realm exists or not.

Q: *But the scriptures say that there are many realms of existence.*

Amma: There are no separate realms, my child; there is only the one Universe. Consider these three rooms—this room, that room, and the room behind. These rooms are formed if there are walls to separate them. If the walls are not there, all these are one, aren't they? The many do not exist for He who has become everything.

Q: *But the same scriptures that mention the sun and planets, also mention the realms of existence.*

Amma: The realms are within the Universe. All is the Universe. For the all-pervading *Sakti* the realms do not exist; for us they exist. If you knew what was happening now in your home, you would not be feeling anxious about it, would you? *

It is according to our experiences here (in this world) that we differentiate 'good' and 'bad'. How are 'good' and 'bad' defined? They are dependent on our likes and dislikes. An action which one person likes, another does not like. What to that fellow seems 'good', to this fellow many seem 'bad'. Furthermore, an individual's ideas of 'good' and 'bad' vary with time and circumstances.

There are rules and regulations in society—this is applicable to them too. It is considered 'wrong' (in India) for a woman not to put a mark *(bottu)* on her forehead. What is wrong if it is not worn?

Q: *Then may we oppose society?*

Amma: It does not matter even if you do oppose society but can you?

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* The questioner was feeling some anxiety because his family had not arrived as expected.

Q: *How did these rules arise, Amma?*

Amma: They were formed. Their origin is thought. Where were thoughts at the very beginning of life itself? Some *Sakti* or God or 'something' must have formed them. That *Sakti* must have form, mustn't It? Whether it is said that sin and merit exist or not, That alone is the cause. What is the cause for one to acquire a human birth? They say that good works in previous lives have earned us a human birth. I say that He who is responsible for the origin of mankind does all this Himself. They say that Yogi Vemana committed many sins, but changed later. I express my *bhava* (attitude), that is all. They say we should strive to reach the One glorious as ten million suns, and that good works in this life will take us to Him. But to do good works in this life, one must have done good works in a previous life; and there is a life still prior to that one, isn't there? Let us suppose that previous lives, sin and merit, and heaven and hell do exist—even then, can we do what is required to acquire merit? Now let us suppose all those do not exist—even then, can you kill if I ask you to? Words cannot impel actions. He who has the disposition *(guna)* to kill cannot remain without killing.

Volition is Responsible; Not You

Questioner A: *Amma, I'm afraid that in my youth I killed several people, directly or indirectly.*

Amma: So what?

A: *I was involved in a certain political movement and thought that It was my* dharma *to kill them.*

Amma: You thought *you* killed them? Well what does the Gita have to say about that?

A: *It says that one can neither kill nor be killed, for He is the sole Agent* (karta). *Perhaps I was only an Instrument ...*

Amma: If you think that you are responsible for your actions, then you are prepared for the consequences. That is all right. If you think that in doing these things you are an Instrument of 'something', then leave the consequences to that 'something'. In either case, why worry about it?

B: *Isn't he guilty?*

Amma: In my view, all actions *(karmas)* follow volitions *(sankalpas)*, and volitions come because of an impulsion *(prerana)*. Atheists believe that the impulsion comes from within themselves; theists believe that it comes from outside. In either case, volition is the cause of action. Volition is itself that 'something'. So where is the question of an individual's guilt?

B: *But suppose he is hanged tomorrow for his actions!*

Amma: Why suppose? What is to happen will happen! If he thinks that he himself acts, he experiences the consequences, regarding, his own actions as their cause. If he thinks that some external Agent is responsible for his actions, he should regard the consequences too as Its grace.

If I Gave You a Knife Could You Kill?

Amma: My child, don't ever think that you are doing anything. Believe, 'That which produces the volition *(sankalpa)* for whatever action I want to do, and that which causes me not to want to do certain actions, is that supreme *(ateeta) Sakti*.' The One that causes everything to be done, the One that does everything, dwells within you as the impulsion *(prerana)*. 'He having become everything, is causing everything to be done'—when that feeling is there, all the joys and sorrows and losses and gains in life are His, not yours. So do not imagine, 'I am doing something. Everything is happening because of me'. Your existence in this Universe is purely nominal.

Questioner: *If He causes everything to be done, then we have neither sin nor virtue.*

Amma: When you feel, 'That which causes actions to be done, and that which does, is He alone,' then for you sins and virtues do not exist.

Q: *Do you mean that if somebody is killing somebody else, we should think of the action as not being done by that fellow?*

Amma: Think like that only, my child.

Q: *What are you saying, Amma! If your theory is believed, someone will kill someone else and say, 'The killing was not done by me'— he will escape by throwing the burden on God!*

Amma: (Smiles.) Is it like that, my child? I shall give you a knife. While thinking, 'I myself am killing', kill a few people and then return! We shall see. I shall bear all responsibility for any sin that comes thereby.

Q: *Forgive me, Amma, for being confused and bothering you with crazy questions.*

Amma: (Laughs.) No, my child. You were feeling intensely; now I am feeling a bit intensely. It always delights me when there is someone like you who questions with an open mind.

In conclusion it might be said that without the effort of 'that fellow above', nobody can kill anybody. The one who kills, and the one who is killed— everything is His Decision *(nirnaya)* alone, my child.

Listen! To you all I am saying, 'Commit murders, play cards, drink, steal, behave immorally!' Even so, not one of you steps forward and says, 'All right, I will!' Yet not one of you can accept the fact that nothing is in your hands ... Poor fellows, poor fellows!

Q: *When you say, 'Nothing is in our hands', do you mean that we may do whatever we feel like?*

Amma: If you can do so, do it! Let us see.

Q: *I want to do good deeds, but cannot; I want to stop doing bad deeds, but cannot. For some reason the mind is inclined to do only bad deeds.*

Amma: In fact, what do 'good' and 'bad' mean? Sri Krishna killed Narakasura (the demon king), and we are celebrating that day as a festival. If someone else kills, it is 'murder'. We do not call it 'murder' if a judge sentences someone to be hung. We do not consider the judge guilty, do we? So it all depends on how we view it. Krishna said, 'This is I; that is I,' and finally, He said. 'All is I alone.' So even evil is He. Perhaps He Himself makes evil increase and then descends to Earth.

Q: *This kind of argument gives us licence to do any amount of evil.*

Amma: Then I shall order you to do a certain evil deed. Can you do it? I shall give you a knife. Can you cut throats? Good deeds, bad deeds, whatever—the doing is not in our hands.

* * *

Questioner: *Honest men must suffer for their goodness, whereas evil men seem happy.*

Amma: If they all seem happy to you, why don't you make yourself happy like them?

Q: *By following their example?*

Amma: You say they are happy. You too could be happy like them. Why complain? If happiness is your goal, make yourself happy; if goodness is your goal, make yourself good. Why think of another's advantage in a field that does not interest you?

* * *

Questioner: *Good people are going down in the world; those who commit crimes and injustices are prospering. If people like you say that there is no difference between good and evil, won't the people rush towards wrong?*

Amma: It is all right, my child. It is all right if wrong *(anyaya)* is thought good and is done. But it is not always possible to think like that, is it? If the mind hesitates, it means that it is not a good deed.

If you think that murderers are better off, why don't you commit murders and better yourself? I shall give you the knife. Fulfill your desire!

You cannot do it, can you? You can proceed only according to your mind's directions. Even if you try to disregard your mind, you will still have suffering. That suffering is the one thing that separates 'good' and 'bad'. It is the mind alone that says, 'This is *dharma*; that is *adharma*'. It is the mind alone that classifies 'rights' and 'wrongs'.

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Q: *Is it good to conduct oneself as occurs to one's mind?*

Amma: That alone is good. There is nothing beyond that.

Unable To Escape It, We Err

(A visitor was suffering while confessing to Amma a wrong he had committed.)

Amma: Even if you have done wrong, there is a place for you here. In the mother's view her child can never do wrong, however much others may condemn him. If I began looking for faults, not a single person could come within a mile of this place. To err is human.

In our society there are certain rules. Does 'wrong' mean only theft and adultery? If one causes any hardship to others for the sake of one's own happiness, that too is wrong. It is not you alone—I too am erring. Of all those who come here, how many am I satisfying? It is not in our hands; we proceed in the way that *Sakti* drives us.

Questioner: *Then have we no sin?*

Amma: The role given to you to play while you are on this Earth is that of a sinner.

* * *

Amma: You say our village is muddy. What if it is? That mud goes with washing; our 'mud' will not go even if we wash. Our 'mud' is invisible. In fact, God has smeared Himself with 'mud', hasn't He?

Questioner: *I know the difference between good and bad, yet wherever I am the mind inclines towards bad thoughts only. After a bad thought has occurred I feel pained, but even so the mind does not stop thinking bad thoughts. Why does it go on like this? How and when will it stop?*

Amma: My child, what seems 'bad' to you now, seemed 'good' at some other time—at that time your mind gave supreme importance to that alone.

The moment the *bhava* (attitude) takes form that the thought is 'bad' at that very moment you have made ready to drive it away. The *bhava* that it is 'bad' has arisen of its own accord; it will disappear of its own accord as soon as the *taruna* (opportune moment) arrives. You need not feel pained about it. It is not something that disappears in a snap of the fingers with a few words or *mantras*.

* * *

Questioner: *Why do I do something, knowing it to be wrong?*

Amma: Knowing it to be wrong, unable to escape it, you cannot but err. There is no particular cause as such. You are not the cause: you are not doing it. Time *(kala)* alone is the cause, not you—Time is God. You have no responsibility; God alone is responsible.

Q: *But if one's entire life is made up of wrongs, what hope is there of salvation?*

Amma: You cannot do wrong only.

Q: *But I am doing so.*

Amma: There is no problem if you think that God is making you act. Otherwise, if you cannot reach this *bhava* (attitude), all right, do wrong—the responsibility is mine!

God Needs No Propaganda

Q: *Tradition is dying, atheism is gaining strength and purity has reached its lowest ebb. Fads dominate our minds. In these circumstances what should people like us do? Should we simply bear all this silently or should we begin spreading theist propaganda?*

Amma: Does God need propaganda? There is no question at all of propaganda.

Q: *Is even anti-propaganda not necessary?*

Amma: So many things are going on. Every day many people are coming to see me here. The atheist campaign has not influenced them, has it?

Q: *But you don't know the power of the atheist campaign. Even those who worship God in the privacy of their own homes are, from fear, publicly supporting atheism ... They are even burning pictures of the gods.*

Amma: Propaganda is not just words—only change of mind is propaganda, not words. Owing to the circumstances the words must come, but nothing happens because of words—the power of words is insufficient. Everything happens of its own accord.

Q: *Then what do you advise us to do?*

Amma: You need not do anything. Despite all the propaganda, 'what is' is existing. 'What is' is mind alone. Telling one fellow about another is also propaganda. When you think that 'what is' is God alone,

there is no 'this fellow's propaganda' and 'that fellow's propaganda': whatever happens is due to that *Sakti*.

Q: *When the government is itself supporting the burning of the gods' pictures, how can we possibly get the power to stand up to them? Should we just give up and sit as idle spectators?*

Amma: God is a *bhava*, isn't He? That *bhava* cannot be removed or burnt. Pictures may be removed, but how can they remove your *bhava*? If God is so weak and man so powerful, what is lost even if He does burn?

Q: *Do you have a message* (sandesa) *for people?*

Amma: A message? I have nothing of that name. I have not given anything as a message—as if I ever thought that we are doing, or can do, anything! That which makes things happen, and that which happens—that is the message. Words alone are not a message, are they? If you can do it, eat what you have with contentment, give to others with loving care *(adarana)*, and have faith that God is doing everything.

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* * *

Questioner: *Our religion is rapidly declining. There is not enough propaganda. Other religions have a lot of propaganda, and Hindus are converting to them. There are none who follow the Hindu religion properly. Will this situation change in time, Amma?*

Amma: What are you talking about, my child?

Q: *The Hindu religion, Amma! Our religion is fast disappearing. Hindus are converting to other religions.*

Amma: 'Religion' *(mata)* means 'devoid of mine-ness *(mamatva)*', doesn't it?

Q: ... *Yes, Amma! That's right. You have spoken the truth.*

Goodness Cannot Be Taught

Amma: Seeing good everywhere, that alone is goodness.

* * *

Amma: We think that immorality exists, don't we? Everyone without exception is saying that immorality is increasing. There is no one who does not bring up this topic of immorality, but when it comes to themselves there is no one who is refraining from it. There are no others indulging in it besides those who are talking about it. It would be enough if the fervour in these people's words, existed in their deeds. Morality is often more to be found in those who have erred once or twice in their lives and are therefore despised by society, than in those who go about preaching with high-sounding words. Man cannot desist from immorality by means of spiritual thinking. Perhaps desisting from immorality is itself spirituality. I do not feel it is in man's hands.

* * *

Questioner: *Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo—all these tried to set their visitors on the right path. Why don't you do that, Amma ?*

Amma: Because I cannot do it.

Q: *How can you say so? After all, once you have drawn us to you it is only proper that you guide us along the right path.*

Amma: It never occurs to my mind that I should guide people along the right path or that I am doing so. When He himself guides, when He himself determines that it should happen like this in this *yuga* (age), where is the question of it being altered? You may go out and propagate the Hindu *dharma*, but who doesn't already know it? Only when all people reform can we call it 'reform'. We don't see even the effort in that direction. If such a thing as reformation were possible, it ought to have been accomplished already by all the lectures.

Before you came here you were very worried about the sacred law, which enjoins self-control; but I told you never to think of that. Isn't this straying onto the path of evil? Here, only this evil is to be learnt. People cannot learn goodness, nor can I teach it. It is not within my power to do so. When people come to see one who is powerless to do anything, what can they learn?

Q: *But what shall we tell the people about you?*

Amma: Tell them that I am like this. Say whatever comes off your tongue. If people think that I have done something for them, good or evil, that is their faith. Even Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the others replied to their visitors' questions by telling them what they themselves had done—'I have practiced this; you do so too'.

Q: *Because you practiced nothing, you tell us to do so too, don't you?*

Amma : They too did not claim to be reformers. When they were asked about *sadhana* (spiritual practice) they simply told what they had done and advised people to do the same.

* * *

Questioner: *What message* (sandesa) *do you give daily to the devotees?*

Amma: There is nothing being given specially as a message, my child. They ask something and I answer. Though they may have taken some of my sayings as a message, I do not feel that I am giving anything as a message. Doesn't a mother ask her children whether their brother has come? That's all. There is no message being specially given.

Questioner: *Amma, give me a message to attain salvation.*

Amma: In fact only that which can impel you to act is a message. Words do not convey it. If it were otherwise, everything would end

in doubt and uncertainty. Only that which removes all doubt is a message.

* * *

Questioner: *Amma, what is your ideal? What is your message?*

Amma: Now you have seen me. If you find any good in me, and can practice it, do so.

'The House of All' This Is Everyone's Home

Questioner: *Amma, how long may I stay here?*

Amma: For as long as you wish. I have no objection to your staying here.

Q: *Then please give me some work to do. I will do anything.*

Amma: The first thing that you must do is to ask for your requirements freely and frankly, and learn to regard this as your home. Then that very feeling will teach you to choose your appropriate work—that work which you can best do and which is most needed by your home.

This is not a wealthy institution. There is no custom here of asking people for donations. We need not bother ourselves with how the resources are coming and how it is continuing. This is everyone's home. Here there is work appropriate to everyone's abilities. No one sits idle.

Those problems which troubled you at other *asramas* (spiritual retreats) are found everywhere—nowhere is there perfect peace and happiness. There are always problems, though they may differ in kind. One must learn to adjust and bear them, and be happy in spite of them. Except for the joy that you are able to see and be near me, all the other problems are present even here. In fact there is more trouble than ease here. The food you get here is meant to sustain you, not to satisfy your taste.

The other places you visited were all *asramas* with definite rules and discipline. This is just a home with no rules laid down for those who stay here, where individuals of diverse mentalities and behaviours have gathered, some perhaps immature and unmanageable. I do not find it difficult to bear, because I view everything as Him and His doing. But you who are not free of the look, which discriminates, may find it difficult to tolerate, for no two persons agree as to their thoughts and actions. I do not say that anyone is wrong—all are equally my children. It is not an easy thing to adjust to everyone, to see the good in a person rather than his faults. So you may find problems here that are even more difficult than those elsewhere.

There is only one gate here for coming and for going, and it is always left open. There is not one gate for one person, and another gate for another. My *bhava* (attitude) towards you is the same when you want to leave, as when you came. There is no change in my opinion. I draw all kinds of people near me without considering their merits and defects. Just as a beggar's bowl receives whatever is thrown in it, so too this home gathers all kinds of people. That is because I think that I am the cause for all the merits and defects in you.

* * *

Questioner: *Some of those staying here are simply wasting their time and not paying any attention to their work. They should be weeded out immediately to prevent the atmosphere getting polluted.*

Amma: When you remove a poisonous plant from here, it only yields poisonous fruit elsewhere. Removing the plant is not the solution; what is necessary is that the poison be eliminated. Consider this village—how hostile it once was! Has it not changed? So too will these people change. Why bother about them? Time brings about all change.

There Are No Dos and Don'ts Here

Questioner: *Amma, no discipline is imposed on those staying here. Shouldn't there be strict discipline in such a holy place? Everyone thinks and do as he or she pleases. How can spirituality possibly grow in such an atmosphere?*

Amma: (Smiles.) True, no strict discipline is imposed here. Can any kind of discipline be imposed? Must not it come of its own accord? How long does imposed discipline last? Don't you still want to act according to your own nature even when discipline is imposed? What does imposed discipline achieve, apart from making people suffer for the sake of some limited aim? Discipline is necessary for the individual and for society, but only that discipline which arises of its own accord endures and benefits everyone.

A certain *sadhu* (ascetic) who came here said to me, 'What is being done here, Amma, by you, by those who live here, or by those who visit? They do not appear to be doing any kind of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), and you do not appear to be giving them anything of value. Everything appears to be an aimless drift. I cannot understand how either the individual or the world is benefited by the state of affairs existing here at Jillellamudi. But if what I say is incorrect, please enlighten me, Amma.'

I told him, 'No. What you have said seems correct. As you said, there is no kind of giving or receiving here. My children simply come to see me, stay for a day or two if necessary, eat their food and return home, satisfied perhaps. That's all. I do not feel that I am specially giving anything of value. I do not know what to give and what not to give. I do not feel that I am giving anything that benefits anyone materially or spiritually.'

Questioner: *There isn't much discipline here Amma.*

Amma: I wonder what that word means... The people here may not all be putting *vibhuti* (sacred ash) on their foreheads and chanting

stotras (verses in praise of God) at the same time, but are they not keeping Amma in their minds as they work? How can others know that these people have dedicated their minds to Amma? Though 'G' is in the tea shop, her mind is here. 'V' is to be seen washing cups—you do not know that she has dedicated her mind, do you? Your thoughts are usually based on the actions you see. These people are working only because there is *bhakti* (devotion). How can anyone say what is going on here? Their prayer *(suprabhata)* is whatever work they are doing.

This is an *asraya* (refuge), but not an *asrama* (abode for ascetics). This is just an ordinary home; there are no dos and don'ts and obstacles here. Not everyone living here may feel that this is his home. As soon as 'R' came here, he thought, 'This is my home.' He has that *bhava* (attitude) naturally. Everyone may get disgusted at times, but to feel, whatever happens, 'I must not leave', is the sign of a dedicated mind.

I Don't Think, 'I Am Feeding Them'

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Questioner: *Let any number of people come at any time, they can eat here.*

Amma: Any number of people may come here at any time, but not everyone can eat here, my child. I think, 'Their food is here, and they are eating it'; I do not think, 'I am giving'. I do not have that *bhava*. I do not know how this is going on. Only those who are to eat here, can eat here. If his food is not here, he cannot come—or if he does come, he cannot eat. When all are eating here only because their food is here, where is the question of my feeding them? There is none of my kindness or generosity in it. This is not a normal meal, but *prasada* (God's gift). They take whatever is available. They have curd with their rice, if that is available. If it is not, they have buttermilk. If buttermilk is not available, they eat rice and chutney. If even chutney is not available, they have plain rice. If even that is not

available, I think, 'Their food is not here', that's all, and not, 'I cannot feed them'.

Q: *I have not seen or heard of this kind of charity* (dana) *going on at any other place.*

Amma: This is not charity, my child, but a mother's *dharma* (duty). I am fulfilling my *dharma*. A poor mother will even beg alms to fill her children's bellies. I do not think, 'This is charity. Merit *(punya)* will come to me through this.' Just as you feed your children, so too do I feed mine. That's all. Why compare this place with other places? At any place, only what is to happen happens.

I Do Not Discriminate Qualities, Let Alone Castes

Amma: I have not asked people to sit together for meals. I am having the food cooked with sanctity *(madi)*. I said, 'Serve them as they like.' In fact how did the custom of sitting together for meals come about? Everyone sits beside someone he likes, whoever he may be. If he does not like someone, he does not want to be seen sitting beside him. When this matter was discussed I said, 'Everyone sit and eat.'

* * *

(A visitor said that many criticized a certain practice of those living in 'The House of All.')

Amma: I am not bothered about what those who do not like me do—whether they criticize me or not. There is no need for me to see that the practice is stopped for their sake. I am not hurt by their criticism. I am everyone's mother. They behave as they were begotten. Their criticisms do not stick to me. You will not see them sticking to me unless I let myself get stuck to them. You are getting stuck to them yourself!

If at my bidding they were doing something improper, and if I felt that it was improper, I would stop the practice ... . Why do people do it, if it is harmful? Everyone has his personal experience, his personal satisfaction. Do they stop even if others object? None of us can legislate on such matters. They are all personal attitudes. I did not know about that practice for quite some time. Then I asked them to stop, but they did not.

Do you like the practice, people of all castes eating together? There have been people who have so disliked it that they have left here without eating their meals. One man ate nothing for an entire day—only when I fed him did he eat. A blind man once came here. As he could not see me, he wanted to perceive me by touch. When I let him touch me, someone criticized me for violating the custom of untouchability and thereby effecting the mixing of castes. Perhaps that man felt that he alone was my child, and that a man of a low caste was not. Everyone has his own opinion—we cannot heed them all. There were those who came to criticize, but who stayed, and who later adopted the very practices they had criticized. Those who criticize, and those who praise—both kinds come here.

Two rival politicians may pray to God to help them in an election. Which of them should He grace? I want to take from him who has, and give to him who has not. A rich man prays and offers a dozen coconuts so that I might protect his iron safe; another, who finds it difficult to feed his children, prays before setting out to burgle it, that he be enabled to get a hundred rupees. The remarkable thing is that both he who lost the money and he who stole it come here. I feel amused. He who has nothing feels that the rich man could easily give him a few rupees, but the rich man will not give him anything, even if begged. I feel that the rich man loses only a few paltry rupees when the poor man robs him. I always feel a strong desire to feed the poor first.

It does not matter if you do not observe that practice (which you criticized): you can avoid it if you do not like it. But if someone

leaves here without a meal because he feels that the sanctity of caste is not observed, it pains me deeply—I do not know whether it is on account of my own intense hunger—my mind is constantly thinking of food.

How can we know how many people are hungry and unable to get anything to eat? We draw a circle around ourselves and imagine it to be the world. We eat our fill and indulge in idle thoughts. We neither object to using the utensils, which they (the 'lower' castes) make, nor to eating the grain, which they grow and harvest, but we do object to sitting down with them to eat. The fault is mine alone. This problem has arisen because I do not know how to feed my children.

* * *

I do not discriminate between people on account of their qualities, let alone their castes, for I have neither quality discrimination nor caste discrimination. If I were very particular about your qualities, none among you would be able to step within a mile of this place. I am not loving you because of your qualities, but for my own sake.

We look down upon latrine cleaners (scavengers). We keep excreta in our bodies, but despise those who clean it up! We will not touch them, even when they are dying. Because of the inconvenience of walking very far to excrete, these latrines were set up. Some people made a living from it. Gradually it became the profession of their caste. But look at the form it finally took—we attribute utter uselessness to the scavenging which is useful to us! But if they do not clean the latrine for a couple of days, we constantly think about them, don't we?

* * *

(A visitor, talking of his future wife, told Amma that what was important to him was her character, not her caste.)

Amma: It is all very well for you to say that you will marry a girl from any caste, but so long as you discriminate between qualities *(gunas),* it is all the same whether you discriminate between castes or not. And it will remain so until you are not disturbed, whatever anyone says about you. Until then you must remain bound by this society, its rules and its customs. Suppose you did marry (a girl of another caste), could you remain undisturbed by people's criticism? No. Both you and she would suffer. I say that you need not marry a girl of another caste thinking that you will reform society thereby.

How far will you go with the statement, 'I have no caste discrimination'? Will you marry someone from the Madiga (cobbler) caste? Then marry the daughter of 'R' from the Madiga caste! If she is the daughter of some high official or a poet, you will marry her... I'm not talking about you alone, but about the general mentality. When it comes to immorality, some 'gentlemen' may have no caste discrimination. If it is done by a woman, it is 'wrong', but there is no such obstacle for a man. They say, 'He's a male. If he does wrong, so what? It's his privilege.' Doesn't *dharma* apply equally to both of them? Why should the woman alone be punished for a wrong which both have committed?

Two minds will not unite. Even the minds of mother and child, brother and sister, and wife and husband will not unite. Minds will not be united by words, nor by all the castes sitting together for meals. Aren't people sitting together and eating in hotels? Only when minds unite, will castes unite.

Joy and Sorrow Are 'His' Forms

Suffering: What You Cannot Bear

Amma: What you cannot endure, that alone is suffering *(badha)*.

Questioner: *I am unable to endure my family problems, Amma. I want to renounce* samsara *(worldly life) and devote my time to* sadhana *(spiritual endeavour).*

Amma: Enduring them is itself *sadhana*, my child. To you they seem like sufferings, but only because you are unable to endure them. If you renounce your family and go out into the world, you will find suffering, no less there. There is no relationship between your suffering, and your surroundings: the body suffers on account of the mind, and the mind suffers on account of the body—friction between these two is unavoidable.

Hardship: What You Dislike

Questioner: *Please explain your saying: 'What you dislike, that alone is hardship* (kashtam)*.'*

Amma: You would like your daughter to be like this or like that, therefore she undergoes hardship. When she behaves, as she likes, you undergo hardship. There appears to be no other path to understanding suffering than that of recognizing others' likes and acquiring *sahanam* (forbearance, patience).

* * *

Well-being *(sukham)* and hardship *(kashtam)*—you undergo them; nobody gives them (to you). Even though someone may be

trying to ensure our well-being, if we misunderstand, we may consider it a hardship.

Suppose a fellow has wife, children, house, property, food, everything—yet thinks that he does not want all those things, but would rather just sit under some tree. If he cannot find that tree, he is sad .... Another fellow thinks that he does not need even a tree, but only some place where he can be alone. If he cannot find such a place, he weeps .... Yet another fellow wants to die. He weeps that he lives at all .... To want anything that cannot be obtained is sorrow *(duhkham)*. Well-being is thinking that 'what is' is sufficient.

Hardship and well-being exist because of the mind. Nobody can avoid these two—they follow you around like your shadow.

What is there to hardship and well-being? Only when it happens for the first time is it hardship; if it happens repeatedly it becomes normal.

Aspiration and Dissatisfaction

Amma: Life is a combination of aspiration *(asa)* and dissatisfaction *(asamtripti)*. Even while dissatisfied we are aspiring for a better future for ourselves and for things to happen as we think. In my view, that which ends with fulfilment is not aspiration. Even fulfilment is not the end of aspiration. As soon as one aspiration is fulfilled, we aspire for something else.

Questioner: *'Aspiration and dissatisfaction—the combination of these two is life,' is appropriate for us, but is it so for your life also?*

Amma: When I get entangled with you, it is like that only.

Q: *What are aspiration and dissatisfaction to you?*

Amma: Wanting you is the aspiration. Being unable to give all these children all they want is the dissatisfaction. Nobody in the world

ought to experience poverty. The aspiration is that everyone should joyfully eat and then just wander about.

Q: *Will it ever happen? If you think hard it will certainly happen, won't it, Amma? It is in your hands, isn't it?*

Amma: The day it happens, where is the aspiration? When I have no aspiration, the day aspiration goes, it will happen like that.

Q: *When will aspiration go?*

Amma: Creation must cease, must not it?

Fortune and Misfortune

Amma: 'Fortune' *(adrishtam)* means 'whatever comes unexpectedly', but in practice, we take it to mean 'those events which are favourable to us'. Whatever comes unexpectedly is fortune; but in our view whatever happens as we wish is 'fortune', whereas whatever happens against our wish is 'misfortune' *(duradrishtam)*.

Even one whom you consider eternally fortunate—you don't know if he is really fortunate. You don't know what his fortune is. The one who is suffering today is the same one who was enjoying yesterday; the one who is suffering today may be happy tomorrow. Everyone during his lifetime has some unpleasant experiences. In this Creation there are events we like, as well as events we dislike. What happens in this Creation is not determined by people's wishes.

You have experienced good days too. Only for the last two months have you been experiencing bad days. Before that you had some very good days. You were born more than forty years ago and you have been having difficulties for just two months, but you remember only these two months of difficulties and forget all the other good days. You have had good days, and you are having bad days too. Your life has been a mixture of good days and bad days. I think it is so for everyone. No one has only good days throughout his life.

In fact your previous experience of good days is the very basis *(adhara)* for you to recognize bad days. For you to recognize the difference, there must be some change from day to day. Only then can you think that you are having bad days. If you were to have only the one kind of experience right from your birth, you would not know what bad days are.

This so-called 'change' affects everyone. We like some things that happen to us and dislike some. This is so for even the greatest of men. There are histories showing that even those whom we regard as *Avataras* (Divine incarnations) underwent good and bad, suffering and pleasure. Show me one person who has remained the same since birth. To begin with, isn't he growing? He who lay happily by his mother's side soon after birth and suckled milk, rapidly acquires new qualities, needs, thoughts and words, and so grows. Isn't he undergoing gradual change? Certain likes and dislikes form in his mind. Of course there are likes and dislikes from the very beginning, but the capacity to express them grows. Isn't he undergoing gradual change? Change is natural. I say it affects everyone. Everyone has likes and dislikes. A day when things happen according to our wishes is a 'good' day; a day when things happen contrary to our wishes is a 'bad' day. Both are present in the same person. Everyone is subject to change. For instance, I had one thought, and then a different thought an hour later. The earlier thought gave rise to pleasure, and the later thought gave rise to suffering. Neither came from anywhere outside: the earlier thought gave rise to pleasure in me alone, just as the later thought gave rise to pain in me alone. They did not come from elsewhere; they existed in me alone.

There are no 'good' days or 'bad' days as such. Good days are those days when you can experience, without getting perturbed, whatever comes to you. If you ask me, every day is a good day, everything is good.

By birth I am the most fortunate of all. Why? Because I never think, 'This is a hardship; that is a hardship.' So where is any room

for suffering? However much you may have—however many comforts—if you think, 'I lack', that itself is misfortune. I say both 'good fortune' and 'misfortune' are only our imagination.

Suffering Is Unavoidable

Amma: There is no one devoid of suffering: everyone has his own kind. (Smiles.) We have come for that alone, my child. In fact 'living' means 'suffering'. If there were no suffering, living would be unnecessary. What kind of a life would that be? 'Suffering' means 'life'. The blows of the chisel are required to impart beauty to stone. It may be that suffering is essential for life to blossom.

Questioner: *Never mind. Although there is all this suffering, Amma, finally we merge in You, don't we?*

Amma: That is always there. Nothing can prevent it. It is not your merging (in Me), but My merging (you in Myself).

* * *

Even if we do not know, God knows our needs better than us. Whether He gives hardship or well-being, He gives according to the need. He says even sufferings are necessary. If He impels a role, that role comes, does that work, and then goes. Your arrival in this world and the way you proceed are completely determined. You cannot escape the pleasant and the painful experiences allotted to you in this drama. Everyone must experience pleasure and pain—there can be no exception.

You may imagine a hundred possibilities, but, finally, you experience only 'what is to be' for you. No one can take from you, or give you, other than 'what is to be' for you. *Sakti* is the sole cause for a fall, an escape, or an injury. Nothing is in our hands.

Questioner: *Who causes the difficulties, which come to us?*

Amma: Who but God gives difficulties? Suppose that, through carelessness, the money, which has come into our hands, has gone.

We may think that our misfortune or our *karma* has made the money go, but He who gave us the money in the first place, has Himself removed it. That God is the cause of everything.

Though we have the *bhava* (attitude), 'It is mine', there is nothing that is ours. And yet if there were no such *bhava*, there would be no Creation.

Isn't the thought, 'It is mine', the source of sorrow? If we do not think, 'It is mine', there is no way to happiness. This 'mineness' seems to point the way to happiness, but in fact leads to sorrow.

Responsibility *(badhyata)* is itself suffering *(badha)*. Painless responsibilities are not available to all. Thinking, 'I am doing', is itself a painful responsibility. If we do not think, 'I am doing', but rather, 'I am merely an instrument', even twice that amount of work is painless responsibility.

When something succeeds, we feel that we are responsible; when it fails, we feel that we are not responsible.

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(A visitor told Amma of her hardships.)

Amma: What do I know about such tangles, my child? I know only one thing: whatever is to happen, happens. There is nothing like 'our' effort. I believe there is another Power that impels human effort, and that we are doing only what It is causing to be done.

Questioner: *And so?*

Amma: Continue doing what you think best, but with the understanding that He impels all efforts. The success or failure of 'your' effort is His. Do not attribute to yourself what is not yours. All is His. Because you attribute success to your efforts, and failure to His indifference, you are tossed between pleasure and pain. When everything is His, why should you be disappointed by failure or elated by success?

Questioner: *When God is said to be like a* kalpa taru *(Wish-fulfilling Tree of Paradise), why should so many suffer so much?*

Amma: Do you mean that He sends us hardships, whereas we earn well-being? Both are His, both are He.

For whom are they hardships? For you alone. For He who has become both hardship and well-being, the two are equal. The one *Sakti* has become two. The greater and the lesser *is* Creation, so this way of proceeding always exists. Soft breeze, typhoon, cool breeze, scorching wind—when we consider what constitutes Creation; there is nothing that may be omitted. All is **That** *(Sakti).* Both light and darkness are **That**. There is nothing that is not **That**.

Q: *Do hardships cease if we pray to God?*

Amma: Hardships, prayer—everything is **That**. That *Sakti* has **Itself** become all these. That which has produced them, removes them.

There Is Pain or No Pain, Only As We Take It

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Amma: My child, you must be prepared to undergo hardships. What do we learn from the stories of Sita, Savitri, and Harischandra? What are our hardships compared to theirs? With one breath we think, 'Everyone is for me', and with the next breath, 'I have no one'. The mind is constantly changing. We need not be troubled by it.

That *Sakti* which alone is, determines your life's path. It does through you what you think you are doing. So, if you feel that you are doing, what you should do, ride up and down life's experiences as unconcerned about their height or sequence as a swimmer in the ocean.

You should worship the Deity of Patience—sufferings are all that need be offered.

Payasam (a sweet drink made out of milk, rice and sugar) is ever sweet, yet some do not relish it. There is great joy in life if there is patience and the willingness to adjust.

It is natural patience that is required, not cultivated patience. When there is natural patience, suffering is not felt to be suffering.

Questioner: *Is it our lack of inner calm that exhausts our energies, making us haggard and quick to die?*

Amma: Be like the ocean, whose mighty calm remains unperturbed though it receives every stream and river.

Do not let the stormy waves of life toss you here and there. Keep the rudder steady and face into the storm.

* * *

What has been thought, does not happen; 'what is to be' is unavoidable.* Although you want to do, you cannot do; although you want to stop, you cannot stop. There is an invisible *Sakti,* which drives you. Its Decision *(nirnaya)* cannot be infringed. So, whatever comes to you—joy or sorrow, victory or defeat—receive it graciously without letting it stick to you, experience it without letting it perturb you.

* * *

Questioner: *Amma, you seem very depressed.*

Amma : Nothing pains me but the mind. As for that, there is pain, or there is no pain, according to the way we take it.

* * *

Questioner: *Please tell me if there is anything in my life that I should rectify. What must I do for my body to be healthy and my mind full of peace and joy?*

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* Anukunnadi jaragadu; tanakunnadi tappadu.

Amma: Think of all the joys and sorrows of your life as being caused by 'something'. Whether that 'something' be 'God', 'Amma', or some invisible *'Sakti'*, think that It is causing everything to be done. Even if someone throws a stone at you as you walk along, think that *Sakti* has caused it to be done, and continue on your way. Let us talk further when you have put this much into practice.

* * *

Questioner: *What is the way to salvation, Amma?*

Amma: Happily experiencing hardships, without regarding them as hardships, is the way to salvation. Thinking that He who gives everything gives us hardships, and experiencing everything with contentment is the way to salvation. When experienced joyfully, suffering ceases to be suffering.

Q: *Amma, what* sadhana *(spiritual practice) did you do?*

Amma: None, my child. I did not even light a lamp before the family shrine for my own benefit. I simply enjoyed every experience, whether it was good, bad or indifferent.

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Unceasing Contentment Is Freedom

Questioner: *I feel that I am moving still further away from God on account of my domestic problems.*

Amma: Through them you cannot but move closer to Him. Only if we know where He is, can we know that we are moving away from Him. If we know that, we have entered into His presence, haven't we ? He is everywhere as all forms. He is with you in the form of suffering.

Q: *How can I know that ?*

Amma: Being satisfied that He is with you is knowing that.

* * *

Amma: There was once a very poor man who had to support a large family of five sons. With the small quantity of broken rice, which he somehow managed to obtain every day, he would cook a simple meal of rice and tamarind chutney, and eat it with contentment *(tripti)*. If by chance he obtained some lentils or vegetable curry, happily giving it to others, he would eat only his usual meal of boiled rice and chutney. On days when even that chutney could not be prepared, he would contentedly eat cooked rice itself.

How difficult it is to find such great, simple men of contentment. Happiness is not children; happiness is not money; happiness is not health. A millionaire may not be able to find joy at his dining table; a poor man with his watery soup may. Happiness arises in the mind, not in the possessions. It is the mind that thinks 'I have', or 'I lack'; it is the mind that wants; and it is the mind that feels satisfied with whatever is available. A mind which thinks 'This is my due; it is sufficient', is happy and contented; a mind which thinks otherwise, experiences suffering. To want anything that is not available is sorrow. Contentment is happiness.

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Jillellamudi

Consider a rich man. Whenever he wants anything, he gives some money and sends to the market for it. If he cannot obtain it, is he a rich man or a poor man? He who has money but cannot get what he wants, and he who has no money but gets what he wants—who is rich, and who is poor? It is poverty if one cannot get what one wants.

* * *

Questioner: *Life is full of troubles When will freedom* (mukti) *be gained?*

Amma: When you feel that life is not at all troublesome. 'Trouble' *(kashtam)* is only another name for what is disliked. When we are completely satisfied, whatever we see and whatever we do, it is

salvation. Take whatever is available. The *bhava* (attitude), which does not feel, 'I do not like this; that is better', is what is required.

Q: *What must we do to get the* bhava *that we don't want anything?*

Amma: There is nothing you can do to get it; it comes if He gives it.

View Joy and Sorrow Alike

Amma: Sufferings? Only when likes and dislikes exist do sufferings exist. This is so, not only for the worldly man, but also for the *sanniyasi* (ascetic) who says that he has renounced everything—he has love for those who give him alms, but he gets angry at those who do not, doesn't he? When he goes to sit on a rock under a tree, doesn't he first look to see whether it is smooth or rough? It is always so, however far we go. We say, 'There is only the One without a second', but we do not experience it. Duality *(dvandva)* is constantly being seen.

Not until he feels that he has become Creation, does that duality go. The mentality, which thinks, 'Everything is I alone', is itself God. He knows the cause of the differences, he is the source of them all, therefore for him there is no duality; but for anyone else, however great he is thought to be, it is unavoidable. *Bheda* (differentiation) is the cause of *badha* (suffering).

* * *

Questioner : *When will suffering go?*

Amma: When the *bhava*, 'This I is He', arises and becomes firm, there is no suffering. It will go when I, and the I which is as 'you', are felt to be the same.

Nothing makes me happy or sad. I feel that I am all. I does not mean 'Anasuya', but the I in all.

Questioner: *There are Upanishadic sayings describing bliss* (ananda)—'Anandena jatani jivanti'*—*but we find no such sayings about sorrow* (duhkha).

Amma: They do not say 'bliss' means 'laughter', do they?

Q: *No. They say bliss is endless well-being* (sukha).

Amma: Laughter is the same as happiness. That 'endless well-being' is not the well-being of our experience, is it? That kind of bliss is not associated with sorrow and happiness— they said bliss is beyond those, didn't they?

Then there is sorrow, but he does not experience it as 'sorrow'. He does not consider well being to be 'well-being'. He does not consider sorrow to be 'sorrow'. Isn't that the kind of thing that is meant by bliss?

Q: *Yes. They say that is itself* brahmananda *(supreme bliss).*

Amma: *Brahmananda* is sorrow and happiness proceeding as One. To be without these two is not bliss; *brahmananda* is the firm, unchanging *bhava* (mental attitude), which views equally whatever comes. *Brahmananda* is the state, which does not perceive dualistically. When the feeling becomes firm that happiness and sorrow are both That, something arises, and that is itself *brahmananda.*

Brahmananda is recognizing that the source of both satisfaction *(tripti)* and dissatisfaction *(asamtripti)* is the One, that both are the same. All these opposites *(dvandvas)* are only parts of That, aren't they? *Brahmananda* is what recognizes these opposites as That.

That which depends on the place, is not bliss. Bliss pertains to the mind. He who feels it, feels it anywhere and any time.

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* 'All these beings, having originated from bliss, are sustained by bliss, and finally merge in bliss'—*Taitiriya Upanishad.*

Suppose that after we have left our house, on our way we go to sit beneath some tree. We look to see whether the stone on which we wish to sit is smooth or rough. That is natural. But bliss is the kind of state, which thinks, 'Whatever the stone is like, at least I have found something to sit on. It is sufficient'.

* * *

'He' Who Gives Life, Takes It

(Rangamma, Amma's mother, died when Amma was a small girl of four. Her serenity baffled her weeping elders, who thought that she had not properly understood what had happened. However, these words, which she spoke to her father and her grandfather's brother, Sri Chidambara Rao, caused them to forget their grief in wonder.)

Amma: Grandfather, where did Mother come from?

Rao: *From God.*

Amma: Tell me. Grandfather, where has Mother gone?

Rao: *Into God.*

Amma: Why?

Rao: *It is His wish.*

Amma: When the one sent by God returns to Him at His wish, why should we weep? Tell me. Father, why should there be grief for us?

Rao: *But Mother has gone, hasn't she?*

Amma: In truth, Father, who is Mother? Is she the one who has gone? Is she this body? If she is this body alone, then she has not gone. If the one who has gone is Mother, then we have never seen her. Then why all this suffering?... The cause is causeless.

* * *

(When Amma was five years old she met an old man whose grandson had died.)

Amma: Why are you weeping? Is it for your son who has gone? Do you have no money for the expenses? Is there no one to look after you? Why this weeping?

Questioner: *I thought he would look after me.*

Amma: In that case, you are weeping for yourself, aren't you? You raised him for yourself. It was for your satisfaction—you derived joy from raising him. You are weeping because things will be difficult for you now that he has died. When he ate what you gave him, you were happy and satisfied. That is why you gave. When he did mischief, you beat him, and derived satisfaction when he stopped. Now you are weeping, thinking that his life has gone, that the basis for your love has gone. All these are for yourself alone. I feel that everyone in the world does everything for his own satisfaction ... How blessed is your son ? He is merged in God ... He who gives life, takes it.

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* * *

'Victory over Death'

(During the seven years he lived at Jillellamudi, Ravi, a young man with a congenital heart disorder, insisted on doing even the heaviest physical work. On the day Ravi died there was a marriage about to be celebrated at Jillellamudi but the death brought the preparations to a standstill. After Amma had supervised the cremation of the body, she asked the people to proceed with the marriage celebration, and she herself participated in it.)

Questioner: *It is written in the* Adityahridaya stotra *(hymn) that it provides every auspicious thing and destroys all sin. Does it mean that reading that* stotra *will relieve us of sin?*

Amma: What is sin? Suppose you are suffering from stomach pain. 'Relief from pain' does not mean that the pain diminishes, but rather that the fear goes. You still have that pain. But when the *bhava* (attitude) arises that He has given the pain, that itself is relief.

'Victory over death' *(mrityumjaya)* does not mean existing in a body without ever dying. One who has no thought of death, one who has no fear, has conquered death. On the basis of the scriptures we accept that Rama and Krishna conquered death—but where are they? They have not become immortals simply because they have no bodies, have they?

I say Ravi conquered death. He was not afraid even though he knew that he would die within a few hours. He never said, 'I must see these people and those people... ' He did not even send word for me. There were no tears in his eyes even at the time of his death, and he did not lose consciousness. I was watching him the previous night. I did not go to him again until those who were with him brought the news that he had collapsed. I went to him and poured some *tirtha* (sanctified water) in his mouth. He closed his eyes for the last time while looking at me. We are considering this because it happened right before our eyes. There may be many more such cases elsewhere.

Goodness Alone Makes Me Weep

Questioner: *I was told you wept when Ravi died. Why was that, Amma? Haven't you said, 'I perform one man's funeral rites in the same spirit as I perform another's marriage'?*

Amma : Even so, where is the contradiction? After he died I disposed of his body without obvious worry or grief; I performed the funeral rites with calm composure. It was his goodness that made me weep. Not only his—anyone's goodness brings tears to my eyes. No one can make me weep by beating or cursing me; anyone by his goodness can.

Q: *You shed tears! Not one drop should fall to the earth lest it spell disaster!*

Amma: All the Earth's waters are my tears. One drop! Countless showers of drops have fallen and are yet to fall. If they had not showered on you, you would have no water with which to quench your thirst. Grief does not torture me at all. You wondered on hearing of my grief; but what am I not, and what don't I have? I have grief; I have happiness. I am an ascetic *(tyagi)*, an enjoyer of pleasures *(bhogi)* and a sickly person *(rogi)*. All are Myself.

Q: *Does* Paramatman *(the Universal Self) have all these?*

Amma: Why not? In asking that question, are you implying that all these are beyond Him, or separate from Him? If they were beyond Him, then man would be the greater for having them. In that case, why God? He could as well withdraw to some corner and sit quietly. Where do you think man got them all from? Did he create them for himself? If so, then God can't be compared with man, can He? This man!—can he even take a sip at the moment he plans to? Can he even open his mouth when he wants to?

Q: *Then what is the state of* Paramatman?

Amma: That state which knows no other.

Q: *What is* Paramatman?

Amma: The One without another. The One that is All.

* * *

Amma: The day before yesterday the big breeding bull passed away. They tied it with ropes and gave it water, but it died. All its qualities *(gunas)* came to mind. Its entire nature came to mind. It used to step carefully over us as we slept. Even if babies were left in its way, it would step over them. During the monsoons, knowing that no one would come and give it anything, it lay down in the temple without troubling anyone. It lay there suffering for a week. Did I weep that it

had died? Did I weep about that? I cannot say what the causes were, but only its goodness came to mind, not its death.

Questioner: *Not its death—but shouldn't* jnanis *(enlightened ones) have no grief at all?*

Amma: Well grief came to me, so please do not count me among them. And yet I have never wept over death.

Q: *Except death, what else is there to weep about?*

Amma: No one grieves over death. Not only me—even you grieve, not over death, but because of the relationship, the union.

Suppose that having gotten married, while going in procession you encounter a corpse. Do you weep? Do you weep about the death? You curse the encounter as a bad (omen). Instead of weeping you worry!

I Too Weep

(Tormented since childhood by terrible and incurable ailments, Hyma, Amma's daughter, passed away on 5 April 1968, aged twenty-five. When asked how such a thing could have happened in her presence, Amma replied, 'It's not like that. I wanted it to happen like this, and I made it happen. No one is responsible. I myself made ready the knife, and with that knife I stabbed myself. No one has any share in it I have given birth, I have reared and I have slain. No one is responsible for it. I wanted it—it became necessary for me. I have done it all myself.')

On the day of Hyma's death many people had already gathered at Jillellamudi to celebrate the Sri Rama Navami festival that is to follow two days later. The next evening, looking weary from weeping, Amma left her cottage and, while many of those around her wept, calmly performed the traditional rites of washing, clothing and adorning the body. But there was a remarkable change of atmosphere when Amma stood in the burial pit by the side of the Jillellamudi

temple and performed the last rites of consecration. Her face was shining with an extraordinary feeling—whether it was grief or joy could not be known. It was then that the following words were spoken.

Amma: Hyma has become the way for us. However many puranas and scriptures we read, we cannot avoid the fear of death; but she had no fear. Joyfully calling out, 'Amma, I am coming!' she came. Regarding Hyma as the way, henceforth constantly do *nama* (recite a name of God). This will become a shrine and an abode for those who do *tapas* (penance).

If you ask whether I am suffering and weeping—yes, I am weeping, I am suffering. Just as in a cold wind one covers oneself, just as in the heat of the sun one fans oneself, so too when weeping comes I weep. Although Amma is doing all this with a smile, it does not mean there is no weeping. 'Weeping' does not mean 'shedding tears' alone. I have a body, therefore I am in flesh and blood, I experience heat and cold, I am amongst you, and all these are unavoidable. I wanted to be, and I am; otherwise none of these would exist. I do not think that you are not I. I have come wanting all these and wanting to be like this.

I Am in No Way Different from You

(Seven weeks after Hyma's death, the following conversation took place.)

Questioner: *Does Amma feel sad that Hyma has gone?*

Amma: Yes, I do. Not for a single moment do I forget her. Every tiny detail of her life, from the moment of conception until the moment when the last rites were completed, comes to my mind. I remember even the skirts she wore as a child. I have all the qualities *(gunas)* that you people have. I too feel the pinch of her physical absence. When I experience suffering I do not try to restrain it, even though I am in the presence of many people. But, strangely enough, whereas

most people have outbursts of sorrow when their relatives come to console them, I do not feel that way—at such moments sorrow is completely absent.

Q: *But according to the scriptures,* yoga-purushas *(Enlightened ones) should be free from joy and sorrow.*

Amma: But where are such *yoga-purushas* to be found? Even when there is one, we cannot recognize him. Those who are considered such, do not completely conform to the (scriptural) criteria.

I like the feeling expressed in the poems, which you read out the other day. He (Khalil Gibran) did not aspire for a calm life free from tears and laughter, but recognized that Creation is like a picture painted in the two colours of sorrow and happiness. He recognized them to be God's forms. His feeling agrees with mine. I too do not feel that I should try to avoid suffering and sorrow—I experience them both without any restraint.

Q: *If you have the same qualities we have, how are you different? Why do people worship you?*

Amma: I have all the qualities that you have. I am one like you. Because of their purity they perceive Divinity in me and worship me. I am in no way different from you. I experience pain and pleasure, attachment and loss as you do. I do not try to avoid sorrow.

Q: *But the scriptures speak of 'conquering duality'.*

Amma: I don't know. I have not read them. Who is a *yoga-purusha?* Was Sri Krishna such? Then why was it necessary to rescue Him from prison as soon as he was born? And what was His attitude towards Abhimanyu's death?*

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* Perhaps Amma is suggesting that even *yoga-purushas* did, bound by necessity, know that Abhimanyu would be slain, Krishna left him to die.

Q: *Perhaps it was His will.*

Amma: Then how is He different from us? If we were to do what He did, it would be called 'murder'. When God does something worldly, they call it 'spiritual'; when man does something spiritual, they call it 'worldly'.

There are no superhuman qualities in me; all are human qualities only. They are easily recognizable: this household, children, joys and sorrows .... When the time came for Hyma's funeral rites, I did them; now I am weeping. When she became ill, I became anxious. Had she recovered, I would have been overjoyed; as she has gone, I am sad. Yesterday it seems more than a hundred people died (in a heat wave), but this death is causing me more sorrow.

Q: *But you could easily restrain these feelings, couldn't you?*

Amma: I do not want to restrain them. My way is to do whatever comes to me. I weep when I am alone; I wipe away the tears when I come out. Even now while talking with you, sorrow is arising in my heart. They say that sorrow bursts out uncontrollably at the sight of relatives, but it is not so with me, and especially in such circumstances. After Hyma died, when my stepmother and uncle embraced me to console me, I felt no grief at all. It is not that the memory of the whole thing had faded away; I did not forget it for even a moment. At that time, not only did I feel no sorrow, but those around me also felt no sorrow. When 'J' was badly injured in an accident in the fields, in spite of severe pain she continued chanting 'Amma'. That brought tears to my eyes.

Q: *But why do you say that you are just like us? The differences are too many! You don't feel like restraining sorrow, nor did you feel any sorrow when your relatives came to console you. We even force ourselves to cry; for fear that others will think us callous. Furthermore, the chanting of your name by a seriously injured girl brought tears to your eyes. It would not happen in our case.*

Amma: Why all this? I find only human qualities in myself. I have both joy and sorrow. I feel like experiencing both.

Q: *But we don't want to experience pain, whereas you want to experience that also.*

Amma: Yes. I don't want to move far away from them.

'Natural Parental Affection'

(A visitor, whose ten-year-old son had died in a car accident, told Amma that he was unable to forget the circumstances of his son's death, and that neither repeating *mantras* nor helping children of his son's age, seemed to relieve his sorrow. He apologized for bothering Amma with his troubles.)

Amma: (Takes his head in her lap.) To whom will you tell your troubles, my child, if not to your mother? I understand your suffering. That suffering is like breathing in and breathing out, that's all. You cannot forget. As long as we live we must suffer. It is unavoidable—after all the mind is alive, isn't it? If laughter comes, we must laugh; if weeping comes, we must weep; if suffering arises, we must suffer. None of these can be escaped.

You may derive some satisfaction by doing something for other children of his age, but how can you feel the same way about them? If you did not have that natural parental affection *(garbha-tipi)**, how could you have sweated and endured any number of hardships for his sake, to raise him? It is because that attachment *(mamakara)* is like that, my child, that there is so much suffering. If something gives you happiness, do it, my child.

(A mother came to Amma consumed with grief at the loss of her son.)

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* literally means 'sweetness of the womb'.

Parental affection is like that, amma!**. However many children a mother has, each child is extraordinary to her. So long as there is life, there is suffering. It is the goodness in the child, rather than his death, that is the cause for your grief amma! No one can remove this grief. Time alone must remove it.

* * *

(The questioner's five-year-old daughter had died.)

Questioner: *Amma, what must I do to get mental* shanti *(peace)*?

Amma: This *ashanti* (disturbance) is unavoidable for the present, my child. *Shanti* will come of its own accord in the course of time. While amidst this suffering one feels like 'Let me resign my job'; one has no appetite, no sleep, yet unable to avoid doing what must be done—but everything settles down in the course of time. That change happens naturally. After it has happened, the anxiety of this interval will no longer remain. Then we shall think of plans for the future.

For her (referring to another mother who had lost a son) this is not the only suffering, my child. She has an additional anxiety as to how this suffering will affect her husband. In the course of this anxiety the earlier suffering is forgotten. This entire process is natural in Creation, my child.

* * *

Questioner: *I lost my wife and son in an accident I cannot forget them.*

Amma: It is better to keep in mind those whom you have begotten and raised for some time, than to try to forget them. It has not become possible to forget them, has it? What is it that you want to cognize by forgetting them?

** Amma often addresses women as 'Amma'.

Q: *God* (Paramatman).

Amma: You want to keep God alone in your mind, but I am keeping you in my mind. I do not consider God to be separate and different from your forms. Even birth and death are His embodiments *(svarupas)*. Duality exists, therefore suffering is unavoidable. I think that He exists, not only as bliss *(ananda)*, but as death and sorrow also. We do not understand Him, but we cannot relinquish Him. The fact is that He has given everything. Even the thought, 'Let's forget Him', brings Him to mind without fail. If He makes us laugh, we laugh; if He makes us weep, we weep. Weeping is not prohibited. He exists as the form of sorrow. I have sorrow, suffering, anger—all the qualities *(gunas)* I am experiencing them, regarding them as His form.

Q: *Why did this tragedy happen?*

Amma: There are no causes. You derive some satisfaction by considering that your deeds in a past life are the cause but however much people say, suffering is suffering only. At least weeping brings relief. What is wrong in weeping for those whom you have begotten and raised? We read books for some time and think, 'This body will surely disappear; it is impermanent', then once again we are our usual selves.

It is best to let those weep who weep with yearning. Weeping should never be suppressed. Only by weeping is weeping overcome.

Suffering and Faith

Questioner A: *Amma, how did this Creation arise, and how can we know this? They say we must know this in order to attain bliss.*

Amma: Though we may call it '*leela*' (sport), we have nothing to do with it. Whose *leela?* That of the Power that willed it—call It 'God' or *'Sakti'*. Though we may call it 'necessity', it is His necessity. How are we the doers in this existence? When we realize this in

terms of experience, we experience bliss; when we merely talk about it, duality persists. When we perceive the two to be One, there is bliss; when we merely talk about it, sorrow persists along with its counterpart joy. If there were no joy, there would be no sorrow; if there were no sorrow there would be no joy. If only one of the pair existed throughout, there could be no thought about the other. They are relative and interdependent.

A: *So the philosophy, which you expound, must become a realization.*

B: *Earlier we thought that we should get rid of our desires one by one. Now we realize that the situation is not so hopeless after all, that it is due to our dualistic perception and so we need not feel anxious about it.*

Amma: Though you may say that, anxiety does not leave so easily, does it?

B: *It must become natural to us.*

Amma: That is why, when you people ask me to show you a way out, I say only, 'The urge to find a way has arisen, and that will itself disclose the required way sometime or the other. That which produced the question will produce the answer.' But if you wish to discuss it as a pastime, we shall do so. This, then, is a kind of hobby just like going to a club. Each one of us finds joy in his own hobby—the player in his game, the student of philosophy in philosophical discussion. It does not matter what is talked about, for it is only his hobby. I firmly believe that mere talk leads nowhere.

Nobody gains or loses anything by going to any particular place, yet how many people come here and tell us that they were relieved of this or that suffering after a visit to this place? Countless! However, problems too arise after their visits here, but they do not notice this fact.

A: *It is because of our faith in you that we are freed from our sorrows by coming here. How could new sorrows befall us thereby?*

Amma: But there *are* some who *do* get them. Others say that they are freed of a headache or some such ailment. Yesterday, for instance, a man came who said that the rain had been postponed until he reached here, and that he could recognize my Divine powers from that. But suppose he had unfortunately been drenched: wouldn't that prove that I had no Divine powers? I say only that Divine power has nothing to do with either your being drenched by, or saved from, the rain.

A: *As you are concerned with our welfare ...*

Amma: I am concerned with your hardship too.

A: *... it is only natural that he should think that your Divine power had saved him.*

Amma: Whether it rained, or did not rain, cannot be the criterion for Divine power.

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A: *The relief and enlightenment we get from you is our only criterion.*

Amma: I say only that you should take it that Mother is behind it in either case. Whether one is saved from the rain, or drowned in it, you should regard it as Her Will. Both are the same.

There was a similar instance at Chirala beach when the jeep we were in went too near the ocean and got stuck in the sand. Waves were entering the vehicle, and the driver feared that it might be swept out to sea if a large wave came. Two or three hours passed like that. Any number of people tried to move the jeep and failed: a few fishermen succeeded. How to explain it?

A: *But the driver had faith that ...*

Amma: The question is whether the faith was there before the experience, or whether the experience gave rise to the faith.

B: *I was there; it was a miracle affected by Amma's grace.*

Amma: But the fact is that whereas these people didn't know the right way to go about it, the fishermen did know, so a few of them could do it. Just as an experienced labourer by himself can lift a sack of rice, which even four of us, cannot.

B: *I think that some of us were proud of our strength and that what happened was meant to teach us a lesson.*

Amma: The driver said that a slight movement of Amma's hand on the steering wheel did the trick, but I say even that could not have saved the jeep without those dozen fishermen. The driver believed that it was not humanly possibly to save the jeep. In fact he got out once to help those trying to move it, but in vain. He feared that the engine would be ruined, and that everything had been lost. In his view these explanations are incorrect. One man described it all as being my *leela*. Is my *leela* intended to be displayed to them just in making a vehicle move? (Laughter.)

In fact when you were here last time a *sadhu* (ascetic) visitor produced some camphor by waving his empty hand, and another produced a five-rupee note from his empty pocket. When the first fellow invited me to visit his *asrama*, I asked him to take me there as he had transferred the camphor from somewhere to his hand; if he claimed to have created it anew, then to transfer this Amma to his *asrama* should have been easy for him.

A: *Yes, we often come across people who perform such miracles, but they knew nothing else.*

Amma: I don't think that way. But if he could transfer camphor, to transfer me to his *asrama* would have involved only a difference in

the material transferred. Camphor is insentient, but he may have bestowed consciousness on it to move it here.

A: *Do you mean that these people don't create things, but simply transfer them?*

Amma: I mentioned both possibilities. I don't know how they do it.

A: Some think that by miracles they can instill faith in people, is it so?

Amma: I think that when the moment arrives at which a sceptic is destined to develop faith, then faith arises in him even without these means. There have been some for whom the faith instilled by such means was just as readily lost when the miracles ceased. But such things are not responsible for the rise or fall of faith in men's hearts. Whatever happens happens only because the proper time has arrived for it to happen. For instance, your wife told me that she has developed a liking for spiritual matters since her father died.

A: *When all that happens is natural, why mention 'God' at all?*

Amma: That which one calls '*svabhava*' (inherent nature), another calls 'God'.

Grace Is Ever Present

(The questioner's horoscope indicated that he was due to die on a certain date. When he became ill and it appeared that the horoscope would be proven correct, his mother took him to Jillellamudi. He survived and attributed it to Amma's grace.)

Amma: I say that nothing new has been given. You are to remain on this Earth, so here you are. To this you reply, 'Though nothing new has been given, you have made me realize that I am to remain on this Earth, therefore I cannot but think that it is grace.' That is your faith. I do not deny it. But the scriptures are your sole basis for saying that. Perhaps there was a miscalculation in the horoscope they gave you—perhaps the astrologer erred. Some such thing might

have happened who can create what, for you, is not to be? Even if life was given to you at some time, nothing new was given. But such experiences give faith that there is a *Sakti* besides us, and that we proceed the way It makes us proceed. That we have to accept.

Grace is always there, but only when the *bhava* (attitude) arises, 'I have been saved; I have been freed from suffering', do you recognize it as grace. Whether you are saved from suffering, or have to undergo that suffering, the cause is grace alone.

* * *

(A visitor sought Amma's grace.)

Amma: Grace is not something bestowed on one for one's asking. Sufferings are as much a matter of grace as joys are. Grace is ever present. But when is it that you recognize it? Only when things happen as you thought they would. At other times you do not recognize it.

My child, there is only the One that protects all. That which creates dangers and that which protects are the same One. The rich man prays at bedtime for protection from theft; the thief prays, before starting on his midnight rounds, for grace to aid him in his attempt. The same One impels both.

In my view 'grace' means giving what is necessary at each time and place. God knows better than we do, what is needed. Whether it is pleasure or suffering, He gives only according to the need. In His view even sufferings are necessary. To give us pleasure, He gives us pain; to give us pain, He gives us pleasure. If God exists, my belief is that He is the One who gives us both. They say, 'Your sufferings are due to (sins in) your previous lives', but I say, 'He who gave that life, has given this life too, so consider that He has given everything.'.

Questioner: *When all are your children, why do you give sufferings to some and joys to others?*

Amma: Necessity itself is value. If I want to make a garland of flowers, I cannot avoid tightening them with string. As I wish to wear a garland, I tighten them.

Questioner: *We call It 'grace' when He smiles on us and blesses us with good; we call it a 'curse' when He frowns on us and afflicts us with evil.*

Amma: In my view they are not two different things—'grace' and 'curse', all is grace. All the opposites—hardship and well-being, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness—all are due to grace alone. When whatever is given is His grace, what difference is there between one who prays for grace, and one who does not?

* * *

Amma: If His compassion *(karuna)* were not there, we would not exist. All we do is due to His compassion. In my view both pleasure and suffering are due to compassion alone. Though we think that we do every little act with our own hands, all we do is due solely to His compassion. Though invisible to us, it is compassion that is causing all those acts to be done at their respective *tarunas* (opportune moments). Compassion is like a wave in the sea. When the *taruna* arrives for that wave to form, the water itself becomes the wave: the wave arises, grows like a mountain, and finally subsides. Every wave seems as if it is coming from somewhere—one seems to have arisen far off, another nearby—but, after all, waves are due to the contact of wind and water, aren't they?

When One Worry Goes, Another Arrives

Questioner: *Amma, my wife and I are in highly confused circumstances, physically, mentally and financially—in all respects.*

Amma: The whole country is. We are just a few among the many.

Q: *Unable to bear the suffering, we came here with the hope that even a single visit to you would give us relief.*

Amma: That might be possible if there were no suffering here. One may find peace of mind, but there are hardships even here. One who comes here may find mental peace, but one who remains here loses even that.

Q: *Even when I want to sit quietly and worship God, my mind does not become clear.*

Amma: As your mind does not become clear enough for you to sit quietly and worship, try to worship even while working.

Q: *I am doing so, Amma. I am accustomed to repeat God's name whatever the work I am doing, but still there's no end to the suffering.*

Amma: Repeating God's name is for gaining forbearance in undergoing hardships, not for ending them. Hardships never go completely: when one goes, another comes!

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Q: *The position now is such that I have scarcely freedom to breathe. I cannot bear it. Death seems to be the only refuge.*

Amma: Though we think like that, we continue to live on. We do not leave, do we? We remain until our work is over, and when that day arrives we cannot remain, even if they (i.e., our family) beg us to.

Q: *We have no strength to bear our sufferings. We place all our burden on you.*

Amma: When you do that completely, nothing remains: the whole burden is mine.

Q: *Please say something to give us satisfaction, Amma! Protect us from bad health. At least if the health is good.*

Amma: I have myself been consulting the doctor. In fact I took some medicine just before coming here. Your health may improve, but I am constantly taking medicines.

Q: *When I think of our son, I am overcome with grief. So long as we had no children we grieved that we had none; now that we have this boy we are unable to bear his ill health. When I think of all this I become disgusted with life.*

Amma: That is what I pointed out a moment ago, when one problem goes, another comes. The causes may change, but sufferings are unavoidable. Your child has become the cause for you to feel disgusted with life's ways. Every experience comes only for that. Suffering too is like that. Experiences may be felt as suffering, but they have their own causes.

Q: *I cannot sleep, night or day—no relief for more than a year.*

Q's Wife: *Never in our lives have we had such hardships. Please support and protect us, Amma.*

Amma: Where is the question of any new support *(adhara)*, my child? It is through the Support, which always exists that hardships come, and it is through the Support that they leave.

Q: *Please tell us when we shall be free of this suffering.*

Amma: Neither joy nor sorrow announced their coming. Will they announce their going? They go of their own accord, just as they come.

Questioner: *Amma, you are all-powerful. You alone must give us anything and everything. I am extending my begging bowl to you. Please remove all my hardships and give me happiness.*

Amma: I am dropping everything in your bowl, my child— things you want, and things you do not want—you must take all of them. Just as you cannot but go through day and night, winter and summer, so too regard every experience as allotted to you. Whether you get

pleasure or suffering, go through the experience with contentment as if I have given it. When it is I that has given you all these experiences, why be elated by success or disappointed by failure?

* * *

Questioner: *My daughter has bad health. Amma.*

Amma: I do not know such things, amma.

Q: *You need not say anything yourself. It is sufficient if you hear—we shall feel satisfied.*

Amma: What is the use of hearing? Words are not what are required, are they?

Questioner: *Amma! I must talk to you. Amma.*

Amma: Speak, amma, but it is not as though I do anything.

Q: *My domestic circumstances are not good; my daughter in-law is ill ...*

Amma: Whatever they are, these things are not known to me. I do not know what to say.

Q: *Please grace me. What is there you do not know?*

Amma: All these exist through my grace alone. These sufferings and hardships—everything exists through my grace alone.

Q: *Alas, alas! Remove them. Amma!*

Amma: I shall remove them when I feel it necessary.

* * *

Questioner: *My husband wanted me to bring up the subject of his promotion, amma.*

Amma: I don't know anything, amma.

Q: *You are the Mother of the Universe! What is there you do not know? In all things Destiny* (Vidhi) *alone must protect us. In all things Thou alone can do so.*

Amma: When there is that much faith, words are unnecessary.

* * *

Amma: When there is a path for sufferings to come, there is also a path for them to go. He who has given you suffering will free you from it. For that the right time must come.

* * *

Questioner: *Can you help my parents spiritually?*

Amma: No one can do anything. When the time arrives, it comes of its own accord, just as you have come here.

* * *

Questioner: *Amma ...*

Amma: Yes, my child?

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Q: *I shall be appearing for an examination.*

Amma: Appear, my child.

Q: *I haven't studied well, Amma.*

Amma: Study well, my child.

Q: *It's not that, Amma ... (Amma seems to pay little attention to him.) Will I pass, Amma? (He looks imploringly at Amma.) Make me pass, Amma.*

Amma: Study well, my child. (Amma applies *kumkum* to his forehead.)

(A visitor told Amma of her physical pains.)

What do I know, amma? I do not know anything. Tell a doctor about the pains. For everyone sufferings are inevitable. Some laugh while experiencing them; others weep—that's all. Who can escape Destiny *(Vidhi)*? The one who experiences (sufferings) with tears goes to the one who experiences with a smile. Here we experience with a smile; there they experience with tears.

The Good Fate in Store for All

Questioner: *Your path is to be found nowhere else in the world. Your saying, 'There is* sugati *(good fate, salvation) for all', is a very great one.*

Amma: People generally think of *sugati* as the reward for virtue *(punya)*, kept in reserve to be enjoyed in a world beyond. In the same way a businessman thinks of hoarding some money so he can enjoy it in his old age. In my view *sugati* is contentment *(tripti)*, a state of wanting nothing more.

I say, *'Sugati* for all', because nobody is responsible for his fate *(gati)*, because That alone is the cause for everything. *Sugati* is realizing that That is the basis for all fates. In my view there is *sugati* for the one who knows, as well as for the one who does not know, for the sinner as well as for the saint. All will attain *sugati*. When? In the course of time: one person sooner, another later—that is the only difference. After dying, everyone attains the same state. In that state there is the same *sugati* for everyone. Because That alone has created all, there is only the one Destiny. Though people's fates differ, ultimately all merge in the one Destiny. There is not more than one Life; only this one Life. All of you will merge in God at death. When God thinks something is necessary, He creates it; when He thinks it is not necessary, He dissolves it in Himself. At death the limited mind dissolves in the unlimited Mind. Death, in fact, is blissful—it is like floating free.

Q: *What is the difference between the state of* jnana *(enlightenment) attained by a few, and the* sugati *attained by all?*

Amma: The *jnani* never asks, 'What is my present state and what will be my state after death?' That question never arises. Where is death for him? Only if he thinks there is birth, will he think there is death? The *jnani* is independent of everything, free; he who attains *sugati* is like the foetus protected within the mother's womb. The *jnani* attains *sugati* while still alive in the body; the other when he dies.

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